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*Selected Poems by
John Keats*

JOHN KEATS: SELECTED POEMS



JOHN KEATS

1795-1821

SELECTED POEMS

JOHN KEATS

*Edited with an Introduction
and Notes by*
EDMUND BLUNDEN



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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION by Edmund Blunden	II
POEMS (1817)	53
<i>Dedication to Leigh Hunt</i>	54
<i>'I stood tip-toe upon a little hill'</i>	55
<i>Specimen of an Induction to a Poem</i>	62
<i>Calidore, a Fragment</i>	64
<i>To some Ladies</i>	68
<i>On Receiving a Curious Shell, and a Copy of Verses from the same Ladies</i>	69
<i>To *****</i>	71
<i>To Hope</i>	72
<i>Imitation of Spenser</i>	74
<i>Epistle to George Felton Mathew</i>	76
<i>Epistle to my Brother George</i>	79
<i>Epistle to Charles Cowden Clarke</i>	82
<i>Sonnet to my Brother George</i>	86
<i>Sonnet to *****</i>	86
<i>Sonnet written on the Day that Mr. Leigh Hunt Left Prison</i>	87
<i>Sonnet 'How many bards gild the lapses of time!'</i>	87
<i>Sonnet to a Friend who sent me some Roses</i>	88
<i>Sonnet to G.A.W.</i>	88
<i>Sonnet 'O Solitude! if I must with thee dwell'</i>	89
<i>Sonnet to my Brothers</i>	89
<i>Sonnet 'Keen fitful gusts are whisp'ring here and there'</i>	90
<i>Sonnet 'To one who has been long in city pent'</i>	90
<i>Sonnet on First Looking into Chapman's Homer</i>	91
<i>Sonnet on Leaving some Friends at an early Hour</i>	92
<i>Sonnet addressed to Flaydon</i>	92
<i>Sonnet addressed to the Same</i>	93
<i>Sonnet on the Grasshopper and Cricket</i>	93
<i>Sonnet to Kosciusko</i>	94
<i>Sonnet 'Happy is England!'</i>	94
<i>Sleep and Poetry</i>	95
ENDYMION, A Romance	107

POBMS (1820)	211
<i>Lamia</i>	213
<i>Isabella, or The Pot of Basil. A Story from Boccaccio</i>	231
<i>The Eve of Saint Agnes</i>	245
<i>Ode to a Nightingale</i>	255
<i>Ode on a Grecian Urn</i>	258
<i>Ode to Psyche</i>	259
<i>Fancy</i>	261
<i>Ode</i>	267
<i>Lines on the Mermaid Tavern</i>	265
<i>Robin Hood</i>	266
<i>To Autumn</i>	267
<i>Ode on Melancholy</i>	269
<i>Hyperion</i>	270
THE FALL OF HYPERION. <i>A Dream</i>	293
THE CAP AND BELLS	309
THE EVE OF SAINT MARK	333
ODES, LYRICS AND SONGS	339
<i>Ode to Apollo</i>	341
<i>Hymn to Apollo</i>	342
<i>Ode to May</i>	343
<i>Ode on Indolence</i>	344
<i>Ode to Fanny</i>	346
<i>In drear-nighted December</i>	347
<i>Lines on seeing a Lock of Milton's Hair</i>	348
<i>I had a Dove</i>	349
<i>Shed no Tear</i>	350
<i>Ah! woe is me</i>	350
<i>Extracts from an Opera</i>	351
<i>Chorus of Fairies</i>	353
<i>Hence, Burgundy</i>	357
<i>Song (Spirit here that reignest)</i>	357
<i>Welcome Joy</i>	358
<i>The Poet</i>	359
<i>Meg Merrilies</i>	359
<i>La Belle Dame Sans Merci</i>	360
<i>What can I do?</i>	363
<i>This Living Hand</i>	364

REFLECTIVE, OCCASIONAL AND HUMOROUS	365
<i>The Thrush said . . .</i>	367
<i>Epistle to John Hamilton Reynolds</i>	367
<i>Lines Written in the Highlands after a Visit to Burns's Country</i>	371
<i>Staffa</i>	372
<i>From Otho the Great</i>	374
<i>From King Stephen</i>	377
<i>The Castle Builder</i>	379
<i>And what is Love?</i>	381
<i>Oxford</i>	382
<i>For there's Bishop's Teign</i>	382
<i>Over the Hill</i>	384
<i>Where be ye going?</i>	384
<i>A Song about Myself</i>	385
<i>Character of Charles Armitage Brown</i>	388
<i>To Mrs Reynolds's Cat</i>	389
<i>Pensive they sit</i>	389
SONNETS	391
<i>After dark Vapors</i>	393
<i>On Chaucer's 'The Floure and the Lefe'</i>	393
<i>On the Sea</i>	394
<i>On Sitting Down to read King Lear once again</i>	394
<i>To a Lady seen for a Few Moments at Vauxhall</i>	395
<i>To Spenser</i>	395
<i>To the Nile</i>	396
<i>When I have Fears</i>	396
<i>Written in Answer to a Sonnet</i>	397
<i>To J. R. (James Rice)</i>	397
<i>On a Leander Gem</i>	398
<i>Four Seasons</i>	398
<i>On Visiting the Tomb of Burns</i>	399
<i>This mortal Body</i>	399
<i>To Ailsa Rock</i>	400
<i>Read me a Lesson, Muse</i>	400
<i>Why did I laugh?</i>	401
<i>To Sleep</i>	401
<i>On Fame</i>	402
<i>On a Dream after Reading Dante</i>	403
<i>If by dull Rhymes</i>	403
<i>The Day is gone</i>	404

<i>I cry your Mercy</i>	404
<i>Written on a blank Page in Shakespeare's Poems</i>	405
INDEX OF FIRST LINES	407
BIBLIOGRAPHY	411

JOHN KEATS
HIS LIFE AND WRITINGS

INTRODUCTION

1: Literary Interests in Keats's Time

WHEN the nineteenth century was young, the interest in literature among English people was widespread and on the increase, partly on account of national prosperity and the advance of the city of London in particular, and then because of the general spirit of the age. To explain why at that time such a great wave of political, industrial, scientific, artistic and literary zeal and experiment was flowing through the lives of men in many parts of the world is a perpetual puzzle; but the term 'the Romantic Movement' cannot be effaced or belittled as the reference to the mighty fact.

Dr. Johnson, who died in 1784, and was the son of a well-known provincial bookseller, already saw and himself facilitated the great growth of reading and writing in England. One side of this was the multiplication of cheap editions of the poets, of which an obvious instance was the great series generally known as Johnson's and accompanied by his celebrated short Lives of the authors selected. Another popular enterprise was that of the publisher C. Cooke, who round the year 1800 brought out a large number of British poets in pocket editions at sixpence a volume; and many more productions of the kind might be mentioned. Not everybody would or could acquire complete sets, but it was easy enough to be acquainted with one poet or another through these inexpensive books available everywhere. Moreover, before the year 1800, the reading of English poetry in schools was made much more habitual and extensive through the arrival of interesting anthologies. The title *Elegant Extracts* may make us smile today, but the massive gathering of poems of all kinds put forth under that title by Dr. Knox was a memorable gift to young readers and was greatly welcomed.

Recalling too that as yet the rage for novels had not come to its height, we may readily grant that the subject of English poetry was well to the fore among English readers at the opening of the nineteenth century. The disadvantage, however, of those republications on which the ordinary reader relied and which formed his or her

taste was that they included chiefly the poets of the ages of Dryden, Pope and Johnson, and though this range of writing was one of considerable variety it yet worked with certain conventions of form, theme, purpose and versification which had already been challenged by new and imaginative minds.

The manifesto of a poetic revolution in England, so far as a single book can be so described, was an anonymous collection entitled *Lyrical Ballads* and issued in 1798—the work of two young poets and philosophers named William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Without going into details here let us observe that it announced a theory concerning the whole business and method of poetry, such as should lead general ideas on the subject out of the circumscribed field represented by Johnson's or by Cook's *British Poet*. *Lyrical Ballads* was founded in several seemingly modern principles, including a fresh recognition of the strength, beauty and depth of the language as it could be heard in ordinary life, but what was more important was a heightened consciousness of the psychology of men and women, together with a proud belief in the special quality of poets as interpreters of all that is.

What was felt by Wordsworth and Coleridge, and some of their contemporaries, upon this renaissance of English poetry, cannot be expressed more strikingly than in their own critical eloquence. Wordsworth for example said in his preface to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, "The Man of science seeks truth as a remote and unknown benefactor; he cherishes and loves it in his solitude: the Poet, singing a song in which all human beings join with him, rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion. Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science. Emphatically may it be said of the Poet, as Shakespeare hath said of man, "that he looks before and after." He is the rock of defence for human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love. In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs; in spite of things silently gone out of mind, and things violently destroyed; the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time. The objects of the Poet's thought are everywhere; though the eyes and senses of man are, it is true, his favourite guides, yet he will follow wherever he can find an atmosphere of sensation in which to move his wings. Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge—it is as immortal as the heart of man.'

While the new poetry of Wordsworth and his friend was making its gradual way among the thoughtful, a younger enthusiast opened a campaign of his own for the liberation of English poetry from some recent conservative traditions. This was Leigh Hunt, a man then regarded with some excitement as the editor of a brilliant Sunday newspaper. In *The Feast of the Poets*, 1814, Hunt made some objections to the arguments and the poems of Wordsworth, but he recommended a new attitude not greatly different from the Wordsworthian towards the past and future of English poetry; Hunt, be it noted, was especially curious in techniques of verse. 'We are much more likely', he wrote, 'to get at a real poetical taste through the Italian than through the French school,—through Spenser, Milton, and Ariosto, than Pope, Boileau, and their followers; the former will teach us to vary our music and to address ourselves more directly to nature; but nature herself is, of course, the great and perfecting mistress, without whom we become either eccentric pretenders, or dangles after inferior beauty, or repeaters, at best, of her language at second hand. We must study where Shakespeare studied,—in the fields, in the heavens,—in the heart and fortunes of man;—and he, and the other great poets, should be our reading out of school-hours.'

The story of John Keats which is now to be told again has certainly its diversity of aspects capable of stirring our minds and sympathies still, but the literary situation briefly defined above is closely involved in it. Twenty-three years younger than Wordsworth, eleven years younger than Leigh Hunt, the ardent Keats devoted much of his short life to the question 'What is Poetry?' which they had put before the public once more with such missionary earnestness. Setting out as one of the thousands to whom poetry came as an occasional acquisition of Thomson's *Seasons* or Akenside's *Pleasures of Imagination* or Young's *Night Thoughts* or some such much reprinted eighteenth-century classic, he came under the spell alike of Wordsworth's and of Hunt's views on poetry, (besides becoming acquainted with both men), and extended his own thoughts on the poet's nature most remarkably. Then too he schooled himself in the presence of the world's master-poets, ancient and modern. At times he lived for nothing else but poetry, either to discourse on it, or to write it with felicity; and some of his finest poems are inspired by that same question 'What is Poetry?' or similar concern with the destiny of the artist.

2: *Keats's Early Years*

The surname Keats was formerly frequent. One John Keats, born in 1808, became the head of the firm of Fortnum & Mason. To the poet's contemporaries the name might first suggest Admiral Sir Richard Godwin Keats, who came from Hampshire; and one William Keats from Devon, born in the same year as the poet, was a captain in the Royal Navy also. No connection, however, has been traced between these persons and Thomas Keats, the poet's father, whose family is vaguely supposed to have belonged to the West of England.

According to an early account the poet Keats never spoke to Leigh Hunt, with whom he sometime lived, of his origins, and it was only after his death that Hunt was told of Keats being the grandson of the proprietor of a livery-stables in Moorfields, close to the City of London. Thomas Keats was an employee of John Jennings, the affluent owner of the establishment, whose daughter Frances he married in 1794. Another early account refers to Keats's dislike of having his birthday kept. It is generally taken that John Keats was born on 31 October 1795. He was followed by George in 1797, Tom in 1799, and Frances Mary in 1803, (Edward, 1801, died in infancy).

The Swan and Hoop stables became the property of Thomas Keats in 1804, but on 15 April that year, riding home from a Sunday outing, his horse fell with him and he died next morning. No recollection of him by his illustrious son is known, and hardly anything is noted by others, except that he was intelligent-looking, convivial and of course a good judge of a horse. Mr. Jennings died a year later, leaving part of his wealth for the Keats children; whose mother promptly made a rash marriage with a clerk named William Rawlins. Old Mrs. Jennings took charge of the children and went to live at Edmonton, where presently her erratic daughter—'a lively woman,' it is said, 'passionately fond of amusement'—took refuge with her. But 'too great inattention to hours and seasons' may have hastened her death, which came in 1810.

Thereupon the excellent grandmother of John Keats, then aged well over seventy, appointed guardians for the children, namely J. R. Sandell and Richard Abbey. Of these Abbey, a tea merchant, alone did what was required. Mrs. Jennings died in 1814 and by her will the Keats children benefited, but not so much as she intended, for part of the estate lay unused for many years after Chancery pro-

ceedings. John Keats could usually claim some modest private means, but did not know that he might count on more. At least, notwithstanding all the disasters in the family history, he and George were comfortably placed from 1803 at a school near their grandmother's house, and Tom also was sent there in due course.

Mr. John Clarke's small school at Enfield (originally established by a well-known preacher, the Rev. John Ryland) vanished long ago, but will never be forgotten while poetry is read. It was a country house with all its rural outbuildings and its own fruitful gardens and cow-pasture, and the New River not far away. The master was a teacher of long experience and liberal opinion, uniting sound sense in education with constant observation of the events and personalities of the age. Mrs. Clarke played her part in the life of the school as happily as he, and their son Charles, an athletic as well as poetical young man, was their cheerful assistant. Some of the boys who had the good luck to be boarders at this school were afterwards men of mark, John Keats the chief of them; but Edward Holmes was to write a great deal of good prose on music (including Mozart's biography) and Edward Cowper made history in the science of printing.

Keats's school character for several years was that of a small boy with a great fondness for using his fists and for all outdoor sports, but towards leaving-age (that is, when he was towards fifteen years old) he appeared to change. He then became a tremendous reader of all the books in the school library, especially the histories and the voyages, the department of classical mythology, and even the recently begun newspaper of reform—*The Examiner*—to which John Clarke subscribed. From his school lessons he attained some fluency in his Latin, and was able to set about turning Virgil's *Aeneid* into his own English prose. Altogether, if Mr. Clarke did not take his pupils very far into learning, he made sure that they mastered the first stages.

On leaving the Enfield school Keats came under the particular direction of his guardian Richard Abbey. The date is in question, and may have been the end of 1810. It is also uncertain if Abbey went against the boy's wishes in apprenticing him to Thomas Hammond, a surgeon, in Church Street, Edmonton. Keats is recorded to have disliked being reminded of this apprenticeship, but the reason for that may have arisen later on. One agreeable thing, clearly, about his employment was that he could easily revisit Mr. Clarke's school. George had departed to take his place in Abbey's office, but Tom Keats was still there, and so was Charles Cowden Clarke. Responding with honest energy to the appealing enthusiasm of his young admirer, Clarke told him all he could during his visits, concerning poetry,

music, the fine arts and the heroic progress of liberty. It was something of a surprise nevertheless when Keats requested that he might borrow Spenser's *Faerie Queene*.

That great book was not wasted upon its newest explorer. Keats was already a considerable lover of tales of wonder, and the many marvels which Spenser had invented or adapted drew him rejoicingly on, undisturbed by the historical or philosophical secrets which the Elizabethan poet may have mantled in his fairy chivalry. In addition, thanks no doubt to Clarke's tutorship, Keats was able to enjoy the luxuriations of the poetic artist in the difficult and delightful Spenserian stanza. It may not have been the glory of Spenser which induced Keats to attempt verse himself for the first time, though this has long been supposed the case, but in discovering Spenser he surely discovered much of himself; and the 'school of Spenser' was one in which he was to take a studious delight until his poet-life came to an end.

There is in the *Ode to Apollo*, dated February 1815, something of an unconscious portrait of Keats's aspiring mind while he was still a surgeon's apprentice and still as it were the pupil of Charles Clarke. The poem is written largely in an eighteenth-century manner, with reminiscences of the Odes of Gray, Collins and others—but, this is of no particular importance. What matters more is the idea and the allusion. As for the idea, the moment is sunset, and Keats is contemplating the sun in the west; true to his ancient mythology, he views the sun as Apollo the god of poetry. Then he has the fancy of a number of mighty poets of antiquity, seemingly called up by the splendour and divine harmony of the golden hour to renew their own music. Spenser is one of these; the rest are Homer, Virgil, Milton, Shakespeare and Tasso. In its way this little piece is also a tale of wonder.

When Mrs. Jennings died Keats wrote a sonnet in honour of her virtues rather than in grief, and this time his imagination looked towards the celestial choirs of Milton rather than the Greek palaces of Phoebus Apollo. Through the death of this old lady Keats and his brothers found themselves without near relations who could be much interested in them. Her son, Midgley Jennings, whose career in the navy had been their pride, had been dead some years. This state of things strengthened the bond of brotherhood between the three youths, who formed a real group, and the loyalty of John Keats to George and Tom continued as one of the principal forces in his existence.

On 1 October 1815 Keats became a medical student at Guy's Hospital, on the south side of the Thames and of London Bridge. So far, in spite of some conjectured dispute with Hammond the surgeon which did not prevent Hammond from giving him the

necessary testimonial, Keats's ranges in the world of imagination and daydream had not made him indifferent to the object of his practical life. His guardian Abbey could be content with his regularity. Apollo, after all, was the god of medicine as well as of poetry, though that must have been hard to remember as Keats paraded for his first lectures and his anatomical exercises, or took his way to his lodgings through the grime and clatter of 'the Borough.'

And yet Keats remembered. From these duties and surroundings, in November 1815, he wrote a letter in verse to a friendly rival named George Felton Mathew, who was destined to become not a master of literature but a Poor Law official. Mathew in these early days appeared to Keats to understand poetry well and to personify imagination and fancy in the ordinary round of life 'in this dark city'. He and his family were pleased with Keats's visits and verses, and it was something of a grievance when Keats drifted out of their company, —a change which was certain to happen when he discovered that 'Felton' was only an amateurish or unprogressive poet.

3: Leigh Hunt's Friendship

Leigh Hunt, whose name has already appeared in this memoir, was now to become much more than a favourite name to John Keats. It is necessary to regard Hunt in the light of the year 1816 rather than of his later life and reputation in order to follow the development of Keats's mind and his choice of career.

Hunt had made himself a name about ten years earlier, when he was a very young man, by his ardent and audacious criticisms on the actors in the London theatres. He had then become editor of a new weekly journal entitled *The Examiner* established principally by his stalwart brother John. Its object was to serve Reform in matters of politics and the system of society, and its expressions on many questions of the day quickly gave it a great position among the liberals, but exposed it to detestation of the Tory camp. Through the Regency age the method of the Government was to prosecute and if possible to imprison the rebel journalist and John and Leigh Hunt underwent this customary process. Having repeatedly accused the Prince Regent himself of conduct contributing to the debasement and impoverishment of the nation, they were found guilty of libelling him and sentenced to a heavy fine and two years in gaol, beginning in February 1813. On the day of Hunt's release, in 1815, Keats had written a sonnet to celebrate him and his intrepidity, and his early compositions several times call Hunt 'Libertas.'

But there were other reasons why Leigh Hunt, so warmly admired by Keats's Enfield schoolmasters, engaged the feelings of Keats and many other independent spirits. In addition to politics *The Examiner* discussed the drama, music, the fine arts, and ancient and modern literature with an intimate directness and a fertility of phrase; it published memorable essays and poems by Hazlitt, Lamb, Thomas Barnes and others. Leigh Hunt's own prose and verse kept up a remarkable show of zeal and novelty, and to Keats his poetical character alike in his own songs and sonnets and in his theorizings upon the enterprise of English poetry was an illumination. In his practice as a poet Hunt was trying to reanimate the language and the substance of our writing, with some earlier English poets in his mind and then some of the Greek classics and the Italians, in contrast to the formal and academic lucubrations of many eighteenth-century versemen. Hunt's *Feast of the Poets*, worked up to book publication in 1814, was a critical manifesto; his *Descent of Liberty* in the same year, written as a mask in the tradition of Milton's *Comus*, was politically and poetically at least a vigorous adventure. In 1816 Hunt made a stronger bid for the leadership in a new school of English poetry with his *Story of Rimini*, a tragic narrative in which he tried to catch the possibilities of the things people in real life say (at least, some people) in bringing home the pathos and pain of his episodes; and with all this may be mentioned a number of sonnets on his beloved Hampstead which in *The Examiner* came quickly to the notice of Keats.

Shortly before the time when Keats received his Certificate (25 July 1816) authorizing him to practise as an apothecary, Charles Clarke found an opportunity of lending some of his manuscript poems to Hunt. On 5 May 1816 a little piece called *Solitude*, signed J.K., was in *The Examiner*. The whole collection won the applause of Hunt and some of his friends, and Clarke offered to take Keats himself to Hunt's cottage at the Vale of Health. 'Twill be an era in my existence,' Keats wrote; and one day in October 1816 the welcome moment came. That he found the renowned editor of *The Examiner* among his family and his household gods anything but formidable is easily discernible in his poems; and Hunt's words are clear on the other part. 'I shall never forget the impression made upon me by the exuberant specimens of genuine though young poetry that were laid before me, and the promise of which was seconded by the fine fervid countenance of the writer. We became intimate on the spot, and I found the young poet's heart as warm as his imagination.' Readers of *The Examiner* of 1 December 1816 discovered an

editorial article on the new aspect of English poetry observable in Lord Byron's *Childe Harold* and growing apparent in three young writers, whose names were P. B. Shelley, J. H. Reynolds, and ('we believe, the youngest of them all') John Keats.

Thanks to this introduction to Leigh Hunt at one step Keats got clear of the by-ways of insignificant magazines and literary chatter where Mathew and other acquaintances were leading him. The new situation was not simply one of Hunt's monopolizing Keats, nor of poetical discourses only. At the Vale of Health many unusual men and women found entertainment in the amusingly picturesque cottage of 'Libertas.' All met on equal terms, so far as Hunt could orchestrate such different personalities. There were Hazlitt the painter and critic, William Godwin the veteran revolutionary, Horace Smith the parodist and poet, B. R. Haydon the imaginative artist, Elizabeth Kent the naturalist, Basil Montagu the hater of capital punishment and strong drink, Shelley with his new wife Mary, J. H. Reynolds the writer of idylls and sporting columns, with many besides. Though Keats could not agree with all that he heard from these clever persons, his own intelligence was swiftly sharpened and he soon came much nearer to the important issues in respect of the humanities. Like Shelley, he was 'an acute reasoner' and he enjoyed the unfolding of genuine debate on things that interested him.

But, as it may often be with the youthful poet, Keats's chief interest was the prospect of his communicating his own poems to the public. The manuscript collection grew quickly in the winter of 1816. One of Hunt's friends was a bank clerk named Charles Ollier who had just given up his employment at Coutts's to set up in publishing with his brother James, and the Olliers were willing to take Keats's first book. A curious point in its history is that Shelley of all people advised Keats to keep it back—an admonition which Keats did not much like. At the beginning of March 1817 *Poems* appeared.

Among those who saw a copy one man to whom I have alluded was naturally quizzical, and was unwise enough to make his little joke on it to Keats himself. This was the poet's old guardian Richard Abbey. The City of London had trained Abbey rather for balance sheets than odes and sonnets, and his plans for Keats's profitable career as a surgeon, or else as a merchant, had been ruined by this queer infatuation with rhymes. Keats astonished his guardian even more by announcing that he was going to get his living as a poet. In giving up his medical studies Keats had other reasons than the obvious desire to have his time free for writing; he did not pay proper attention to lectures; he found that even while he was using

his lancet his thoughts were wandering away. The confidence that he could make an income as a poet was not so unbusiness-like as Abbey thought it, for here and there in the days of Keats such writers even gathered their thousands of pounds. Scott, Moore, Crabbe, Campbell, Rogers and Mrs. Hemans had nothing to complain of. The English reading world was not an abstraction; it bought plenty of books of poetry which surely could soon be surpassed.

Though Leigh Hunt was never quite out of Keats's sympathies, the pleasures of his conversation and company lost their first magnetism, and the attractiveness of Keats together with the beauties of his growing poetry caused other friends in the Vale of Health coterie to prefer their own claims on Keats's notice. Reynolds, in whom the cynic and the romantic mixed so uncomfortably that he called himself in the end 'that poor, baffled thing,' sought to be Keats's chief intellectual partner and to share his poetical evolution. Haydon, painting his historical and symbolic pictures in what he believed to be a grand manner, and preaching the necessity of learning high art from the study of the legacy of classic Greece, saw Keats as a disciple and an ally; but he had another reason for detaching Keats from Hunt. The deism of Hunt was all too often the subject of conversation, and Haydon's Christianity was at open war with it. To this it may be added that some of those whom Keats might encounter at Hunt's home were not congenial to him,—those astute, erudite, dispassionate companions T. L. Peacock and T. J. Hogg for example. It was unlucky that these dry wits turned up (for it can hardly have been any other pair) one day when Keats and Hunt were playfully wearing laurel wreaths. Hunt quickly put his off but Keats insisted on keeping his own toy on his head.

It was unlucky again, in personal affairs, that Keats's *Poems* though reviewed affably enough had no sale to speak of, and George Keats rushed in and offended the Olliers by his dissatisfied comment. Yet this bad start occasioned the transference of Keats's literary projects to a stronger firm of publishers, already associated with Reynolds,—Messrs. Taylor & Hessey. John Taylor in particular was a man of letters who must have been well known in his time even if he had not distinguished himself in publishing. Taylor and Hessey in 1817, having built up a safe business on the foundation of moral and useful works and several ingenious subsidiaries, were ready to support the finer kinds of new writing, and they received Keats with the excitement of pioneers who have come upon a miraculous answer to their prayers.

4: Keats's First Volume

Here it is proper to pause over Keats's *Poems*, 1817, the first of his too few books; and the words of Edward Thomas deserve remembrance: 'Keats began to write poetry with the inevitable imitation of the forms and tones which he admired in his contemporaries and the older poets, but with an exceptional fidelity to his own thought, feeling, and observation.'

As for the imitations, Keats gave some obvious clues—in the motto on his title-page from one of Edmund Spenser's poems and one elsewhere from William Browne of Tavistock—to the older English poets who had taken his fancy. In dedicating his book to Leigh Hunt he did not specify a precise poetic indebtedness but referred to his good luck in having pleased such a man with his ensuing verses.

The first poem in the collection itself was without other title than a line from Hunt's *Story of Rimini*: 'Places of nestling green for Poets made.' Then the reader could enjoy the appropriate beginning,

I stood tip-toe upon a little hill...

It is a freely composed journal in rhyme of a day in the country varied with thoughts and fancies in plenty. The manner is not particularly that of Leigh Hunt but rather of Browne's *Britannia's Pastorals*, in which a young enthusiast gathers all sorts of flowers, rural scenes and the incidents of vernal nature into his pages. Before he has gone very far Keats thinks of the renaissance of English poetry: he introduces it florally.

*Open afresh your round of starry folds,
Ye ardent marigolds!
Dry up the moisture from your golden lids,
For great Apollo bids
That in these days your praises should be sung
On many harps, which he has lately strung.*

He later sketches the 'sweet tale' of the Moon (or Cynthia, or Diana) and the shepherd Endymion, which predicts a coming romance in verse by him, and scatters through his meadow-pictures of England the figures of ancient mythology with simple joy. Above all the illustrious dream of the sun-god Apollo begins to mark his poetry.

Next, Keats places the 'Induction' to 'a tale of chivalry.' We are

in the reign of Sir Walter Scott, whom Keats read, and yet he means to try to write of the middle ages in his own way,—soliloquizing,

*how shall I
Revive the dying tones of minstrelsy,
Which linger yet about lone gothic arches,
In dark green ivy, and among wild larches?*

It appears to him that the genius of Spenser may help him most, but the provision of that awkward requirement, an actual tale, does not look likely as the 'Induction' ends.

Calidore, the fragment which follows, with its bright and exact word-painting of the surroundings, presents the hero, two fair ladies and two worthy knights, but once more the indications of anything like a good story are faint. There may be a trace of Leigh Hunt's weakest intimate manner in 'Rimini' where *Calidore* is engaged in the unsettling courtesy of dismounting the two ladies from their palfreys, but this erotic prettiness was common enough in Keats's time, and in Tennyson's early days too.

Passing by two or three boudoir pieces we come to an *Imitation of Spenser* which might rather be an imitation of the admired *Cupid and Psyche* of Mary Tighe, mentioned in one of those poems. Keats passed through the prevailing stage of admiration for her melodious adaptation of a legend he loved. After that there are three candid though mildly absurd sonnets describing his attitude towards woman, or one woman.

A heading, 'Epistles,' brings on better things, as they are also of later dates. These three letters in verse are in a kind of writing which has seldom been long absent from English poetry, and is of greater antiquity than that; Keats is trying the manner and versification of the seventeenth century, so far as it suits his discursive mood. He writes to Mathew, to his brother George and to Cowden Clarke with the differences proper to his several recipients, but the business of the Epistles is principally the inquiry into poetry and the longing for 'Apollo's song.' Keats gives his brother a schedule of the poet's powers among men, women and children. Before Clarke he presents himself with an agreeable simplicity as the attentive and thankful schoolboy, going over the headings of the lessons he has had in the art of verse, in the history of liberty, in the varieties of great musicians. And now he is trying to fulfil the instructions by writing a poem worth bringing to his teacher. and

*Such an attempt required an inspiration
Of a peculiar sort,—a consummation*

which had not arrived. However, these lines remain as freshly expressive of a friendship and tutorship of excellent influence as when Keats penned them.

In enumerating the classes of poetry defined by Clarke Keats's names

*the sonnet swelling loudly
Up to its climax and then dying proudly,*

and the volume of 1817 next includes a set of seventeen sonnets. Most of them, if not beyond question in every point, are well charged with idea and imaginative form, and several—a noteworthy attainment in a first book of poems—have been accepted as among the best sonnets in the language. That *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer* had been picked out by Hunt for publication in *The Examiner* when he signalled the young poet's presence—but Hunt was pre-eminent among critics in selecting the right passage. *On the Grasshopper and Cricket* was written in competing with Hunt, who proposed the subject as a way of escaping from the winter's glooms on 30 December 1816. *Keen, fitful gusts* was an afterthought on Keat's first becoming Hunt's guest at the Vale of Health. *Great spirits now on earth are sojourning* records Keat's initial exaltation in his closer awareness of Wordsworth's poetry, Haydon's pictures and other characteristics of the age's ambitions.

A complimentary sonnet *To A Friend Who sent Me some Roses* has a biographical interest. This friend, Charles Wells, had been a contemporary of Tom Keats at Mr. Clarke's school, and a practical joke which he played afterwards on the luckless Tom quite upset the gift of roses in John's mind and ended their friendship. Wells, nevertheless, was a young poet of whose conferences with Keats we should know more. In the richness of some of his own work (his poem *Joseph and his Brethren* came out after Keat's death) we feel that the two enthusiasts shared a great many imaginative travels.

*Pulses do sound quick music in love's ear,
And blended fragrance in his startled breath
Doth hang the hair with drops of magic dew.
All outward thoughts, all common circumstance,
Are buried in the dimple of his smile;
And the great city as a vision sails
From out the closing doors of the hushed mind.
His heart strikes audibly against his ribs
As a dove's wing doth break upon a cage,
Forcing the blood athro' the cramped veins*

*Faster than Dolphins do o'ershoot the tide
Coursed by the yawning Shark.*

The Keats connoisseur will also pause over such single lines by Wells as

And native jewels fast in lavender,

or this,

And scan the sober beauty of the corn.

In the seventeenth and last of his group of Sonnets, 1817, Keats utters what we now feel as a pathetic desire for 'skies Italian' and the beauty of women in the South; then, to conclude the volume, comes the momentous *Sleep and Poetry*. In some four hundred lines he resumes the theme which has passed in and out of his preceding pieces, the nature of poetry, the need for and the advent of a great reform in poetical activities in England, and his own hopes and apprehensions as a young poet. The god Apollo is the god of England too, and the beauties of the land, as before, blend for Keats with no difficulty into the procession or diffusion of the ideal forms of Greek religion. Generally it is the pleasure-ground of imagination which, a boy still in some things, Keats traverses, but his share of debate on his subject leads him elsewhere:

*And can I ever bid these joys farewell?
Yes, I must pass them for a nobler life,
Where I may find the agonies, the strife
Of human hearts...*

Whatever Keats had read in Hunt's writings or heard in the symposia at Hampstead on the degradation of English poetry by the 'French school,' that is by those who made Boileau's critical rules their authority, and to whom the correctness of Pope was everything, found new and sounding speech in *Sleep and Poetry*. For this Reformist outcry he was to pay the price before long and in ways that his ignorance of the world could not foretell. His verses appeared to dismiss all that had been written by 'a school of dolts' who had still their respected place in the library and with whose poems his own mind was much more subtly tinctured than he saw—the writers of the eighteenth century. Keats also implied that at last a true poetry was being created.

*Yet I rejoice: a myrtle fairer than
E'er grew in Paphos, from the bitter weeds
Lifts its sweet head into the air, and feeds
A silent space with ever sprouting green.*

That charming openness with which in his first book Keats makes known the actual world in which he was noticing a number of things, especially beautiful and precious things, recurs in the last part of *Sleep and Poetry*. He tells us that he put the lines on paper after a wakeful night in a poet's house and in fact it was in Leigh Hunt's study, where a bed had been made up for him. But the pictures and busts in the study were of a kind to drive sleep away from his excited sense. There were engravings of fauns and satyrs, of nymphs and a temple, of Diana and her court at the crystal pool; portraits of great poets, among them Petrarch looking at Laura, and Sappho all alone; a portrait of King Alfred, and then one of Kosciusko to whose modern example many English poets, and Keats himself in this book, had paid tribute.

5: Notable Friends

It has been noticed that the first poem in Keats's *Poems*, 1817, apart from the dedicatory sonnet, bore no title; but Keats and his friends had used the label *Endymion* for it. This was removed because the subject was recognised as a good one for a poem of a longer kind in which Keats could exercise his imagination unstintedly on a significant subject. The introduction to Taylor and Hessey which Reynolds gave him was indeed timely, for these publishers were students of literature, especially Taylor, and could thoroughly admire the selection of a Greck myth for a sustained narrative poem. With them, moreover, Keats gained a zealous admirer in their legal adviser Richard Woodhouse, who lived in King's Bench Walk with a large and well-used library, and, not himself possessing originality as a writer, longed to have a share in the lives of those who did. Very soon Taylor and Hessey gave a practical turn to the writing of *Endymion* by paying Keats some money in advance of its possible proceeds.

Keats thus felt increased confidence in letting his medical career go and in living for poetry, which was what his brothers were urging him to do. The three had been lodging in Cheapside, and in the summer of 1817 they moved into the house of Mr. Bentley in Well Walk, Hampstead; but the year 1817 was one of many travellings for Keats, partly without company, in the belief that solitude would promote his poetical experience and enrich the new work. He apparently began *Endymion* in April in the Isle of Wight; in May he was at Margate, gathering there too his impressions of the sea; he probably stayed at Canterbury; and most of September found

him at Oxford diligently composing his Book III. The last line of the whole, in its first draft, was dated Burford Bridge, November 28, 1817; the inn there, still famous, may have been recommended to him by William Hazlitt. Besides all these places it is conjectured by Mr. H. W. Garrod that Keats may have visited Paris, with his brother Tom, before he made his way to Oxford. One place that he deliberately missed was Great Marlow, where Shelley wished to receive him among his numerous guests; and this avoidance was all for the cause of *Endymion*. Keats suspected that Shelley would try to lecture him on his poetry, and preferred his own 'unfettered scope.'

This notion that Shelley would like to figure as Keats's instructor of course accompanied a similar mistrust of Leigh Hunt, and it was cultivated by Reynolds and Haydon who meant to have Keats to themselves. Leigh Hunt was at the disadvantage, when at last Keats showed him Book I of *Endymion*, of not being able to praise it without many objections. He never changed his opinion of the poem, on which his latest comment was that it had 'no versification,' and when it was published he refrained from reviewing it in *The Examiner*, although he did his best for it as Keats's friend by admitting there the appreciations of others. Another source of uneasiness and division among Keats's literary friends in 1817 was the opening of a notorious and merciless campaign against Leigh Hunt and his circle in the newly established *Blackwood's Magazine*. The first article appeared over the signature Z in the October number, and the term 'The Cockney School' at once came into general circulation. Here again was a reason why the admirers of Keats who did not like Hunt, his politics and his poetry sought to extricate their man of genius from the danger-zone.

The story of Keats's life is a record of many ardent friendships. Some new names come into it in the year 1817, and more than can be discussed in a brief memoir. Probably through Reynolds, a Hampstead resident named Charles Wentworth Dilke became Keats's friend; he was like Charles Lamb a clerk (in the Navy Pay Office) and a lover of early English drama. He had lately edited a large work, *Old English Plays*. In after years Dilke made a great success of *The Athenaeum*, a critical journal of the highest order, which lasted almost a century, and for which Keats would surely have written abundantly. But, to go back, the dogmatic Dilke in 1817 had combined with a friend in building a handsome villa close to Hampstead Heath, called Wentworth Place. There he and his amusing wife entertained Keats and encouraged him.

Dilke's friend and co-builder, Charles Brown, a business man, was also an enthusiast in literature. His star had been propitious when his rubbishy comic opera *Narensky* had succeeded, in 1814, at Drury Lane; but Brown could do better as an essayist in the magazines. As an amateur artist besides he had his good moments. Brown, an odd paradoxical hard-headed person, took to Keats at once. His humour was broad, and for the time Keats enjoyed it and responded to it in kind. More of poetry characterized another of Reynolds's friends, Benjamin Bailey, of Magdalen Hall, Oxford.

The institution is extinct, and even in Bailey's time was only just alive; it earned the limerick,

*There once was at Magdalen Hall
A man who knew nothing at all;
He took his degree
At seventy-three,
Which is youngish—for Magdalen Hall.*

Still, there went Bailey to study for his career as a priest, which finally made him Archdeacon of Colombo; and on 4 September 1817 John Keats joined him in Magdalen Hall for a month. What the city and university offered to Keats's sensibility that September may be discerned through Charles Lamb's 'Oxford in the Vacation,' but the young men were industrious in their different ways; Keats gave up the morning usually to his appointed fifty lines of *Endymion*. The reward might be an afternoon on the river, and once the course was interrupted by a trip to Stratford on Avon. Bailey was already a strong Wordsworthian—he held to the end of his life that Wordsworth was the greatest poet of his age; and, part of his effect on Keats was to increase the young man's consciousness of Wordsworth's writings and opinions.

From Bailey as from several others we hear of the outward appearance of Keats, in which he 'perceived much beauty.' Keats was below the middle height (which caused Byron to refer to him in his letters as 'the manikin') but his head was 'like that of a fine Greek statue,' crowned with his brown and glowing curls, to make him still more like 'the youthful Apollo.' There was one friend in particular, Joseph Severn, an art student, who observed this physical beauty of Keats with a gifted eye, and who was to leave us various and often brilliant attempts at its representation. But Severn was not deep in theories of poetry while Keats was at work on *Endymion*, and like kind James Rice the solicitor, and William Haslam of the same profession, he does not call for much discussion under the date 1817,

that year devoted so conspicuously by Keats to the discovery of poetic principles.

In October 1817 Keats was settling down more or less for a peaceful winter at Hampstead, and notwithstanding all the cross-purposes and cynicisms which were disrupting the circle of Hunt and Shelley he still found in its social hours much to dispel the glooms. He might write to Bailey, after hearing the strictures of Hunt on Haydon and Horace Smith on Hunt and so forth, 'I am quite disgusted with literary men, and will never know another except Wordsworth—no not even Byron;' but such outbursts were not to be taken as his permanent rules, and habits prevailed, including verse competitions in Hunt's study. The main event of the winter was, or ought to have been, Keats's acquaintance with Wordsworth, who was on a visit to London. It was becoming generally known among Keats's friends that Wordsworth, in spite of some dullness, was the chief poetical philosopher of their time. 'Great spirits now on earth,' indeed, as Keats had spoken of them in a sonnet of 1816, had included him first of all.

At a party in Haydon's studio on 28 December 1817 Keats saw Wordsworth with Charles Lamb and several others, but that evening of sense and nonsense did not give him much chance of approaching the older poet; and although other meetings followed Keats made no great progress with one who was not temperamentally able to enter joyously into the poetical enthusiasms of new writers. Wordsworth, moreover, was obliged to be cautious as he moved about among the leaders or auxiliaries of the Cockney School and of political pamphleteering now altogether opposed to his own conservative connections. Even religious convictions, it was felt, had intervened between him and the open recognition of pure poetry; for when Keats had mustered up courage enough to read to him the Hymn to Pan out of his forthcoming romance, Wordsworth's only comment amounted to condemnation, 'A pretty piece of Paganism.' So, the allusions to Wordsworth in Keats's letters are to an unpopular and conceited kind of man; 'yet', the discouraged Pagan admits, 'he is a great poet, if not philosopher.' If not a great philosopher, it was the philosophical design for which so many of Wordsworth's poems were composed that Keats was considering while he read them, and considering with a view to the best foundations of the poems he himself would write.

It is apparent also that Keats was meditating upon the work of two other men while he sought to strengthen and shape his own, and the key to the position is the so often quoted sentence in a letter to

Haydon dated 10 January 1818: 'I am convinced that there are three things to rejoice at in this Age—"The Excursion," Your Pictures, and Hazlitt's depth of taste.' Not many people nowadays regard Haydon's pictures, even if they have succeeded in seeing one or two of them, as Keats did. Keats saw them in the making and heard from the artist what majestic intention urged him onward. They were not to be mere ornaments or notices of the passing day, but moral truths arrayed 'in fresh magnificence' and with sublime energy and drama. Part of the Haydonian theory was that they should be much bigger in measurements than the pictures of other Englishmen. One of these hung gleaming in the firelight over Haydon's guests on 28 December 1817—'Christ's Entry into Jerusalem.' Its object in chief, apart from demonstrating the unique powers of Haydon, was to overawe the Deism of such as Leigh Hunt, who does not seem to be among the figures portrayed as the watching crowd—but Voltaire with the obvious sneer is possibly placed there on his behalf. An excited Keats can be detected beyond a pious Wordsworth. Hazlitt gets in as 'an investigator.'

From Haydon, then, Keats believed himself to be learning dignity of subject and splendour of vision. What of Hazlitt? No such intimacy had grown up between this finer thinker and the much attracted Keats, although they met from time to time. In January 1818 Hazlitt was lecturing on the English Poets at the Surrey Institution, and the *Examiner* circle attended eagerly, Keats among the rest. Indeed a complaint of Keats that in the sixth lecture Hazlitt did not treat the genius of Chatterton justly, induced Hazlitt to open his next address with a longer appreciation of that poet. The lectures have become one of the classics of English criticism, and Keats was delighted not only with their matter and manner but with the personality of Hazlitt, whom he compared to the actor Edmund Kean. Hazlitt, now a man of forty, was at once a clever reasoner and a man of feeling, and his uncompromising ridicule of some popular favourites and fashions was exactly what his youthful pupil enjoyed. But it was not easy for Keats to capture Hazlitt for himself behind the scenes, for Hazlitt had his own life and older friendships and while he was responsive to Keats's poetry his love of authors long associated with his private mind tended to exclude any continuous submission to newcomers.

6: '*Endymion*' and Criticism

After some pleasant occasions in Hampstead and London, and a farewell to Shelley who was now departing to Italy, Keats went to Teignmouth in Devonshire, where his brother Tom had been staying for his health. George had had to return to London, and John decided to keep Tom from doing so. At Teignmouth he met the good doctor who was in charge of Tom, William Turton, author of *Observations on Consumption* and a notable natural historian, but he did not become a conchologist although he haunted the sea-shore. Among his letters descriptive of these West Country days one to J. H. Reynolds was in verse, dated 25 March 1818; and he there indulges in his reflections on imagination and poetry as he is happy to do with Reynolds as his confidant. The sea, he says, disturbs his prospect of happiness, because he can discover even in its quietest pictures and gentlest voices a 'most fierce destruction.' It is the penalty of the seer, and Keats almost wishes he was too obtuse to undergo in solitude 'such horrid moods.'

But the publication of *Endymion* was approaching, and Keats had at least a diversion from sea-dreams in correcting the proofs. It was required of him to insert a preface, and he drafted one of an apologetic tone, including such sentences as these: 'I fought under disadvantages. Before I began I had no inward feel of being able to finish; and as I proceeded my steps were all uncertain. So this Poem must rather be considered as an endeavour than a thing accomplished: a poor prologue to what, if I live, I humbly hope to do. In duty to the Public I should have kept it back for a year or two, knowing it to be so faulty: but I really cannot do so:—by repetition my favourite Passages sound vapid in my ears, and I would rather redeem myself with a new Poem—should this one be found of any interest.' A comparison of these words and the published preface dated Teignmouth, April 10, 1818, shows that Keats's apprehensive melancholy was not a momentary trouble; but he would probably comment that the constant wet weather in Devon was the chief cause of it.

Unfortunately for Keats, no matter what preface he offered or what poem, he had already been catalogued for critical execution as one of Hunt's 'less important auxiliaries' by *Blackwood's Magazine*. The attack on him was fully loosed in the August number. The critic of *Endymion* was much concerned with the awful truth that Keats had been 'apprentice some years ago to a worthy apothecary,'

and began producing the many jests on that matter which readers of the magazine could now expect for some years. The other frantic review of *Endymion* was ostensibly calmer criticism; it appeared in the *Quarterly* for September, by way of a companion piece to the article assailing Leigh Hunt's new book of poems, *Foliage*, in the May issue. Much has been written since 1818 on these destructive notices of Keats's *Endymion*, and it will still be debated whether or not they did more than other adversities to destroy Keats himself. The sense of being pilloried and exposed to the contempt of thousands who would never read *Endymion* cannot have been quickly overcome.

But the bullies did not have things all their own way. They probably stopped the sale of the book, which still found its friends. A thoughtful essay on *Endymion*, its hostile critics and its author's chances appeared in the *London Magazine* of April 1820 and may be considered as expressing a body of opinion among unbiassed readers. 'As a tale, this work is nothing. There is no connecting interest to bind one part of it to another. Almost any two parts of it might be transposed, without disadvantage to either, or to the whole. We repeat, it is not a poem, but a dream of poetry.' But its merits were evident. 'If the young builder has not erected a regular fabric, which will bear to be examined by a professional surveyor, with his square and rule and plumb-line, he has at least raised a glittering and fantastic temple, where we may wander about, and delightedly lose ourselves while gazing on the exquisite pictures which every here and there hang on its sunbright walls—the statues and flower-vases which ornament its painted niches—the delicious prospects opening upon us from its arabesque windows—and the sweet airs and romantic music come about us when we mount upon its pleasant battlements.' Keats was encouraged not to think ill of his poem, but to be more than content,—'this wild and wayward firstling' would remain unique in delight even if he went on to produce other pieces more accomplished and qualified 'to further his fortunes.' Among the many incidental beauties of *Endymion*, early readers probably looked on the gorgeous Hymn to Pan as the best, and Shelley was of that opinion.

Keats came back to London in May. He was now to be deprived of the society of his brothers, for George was about to emigrate with his bride to America, and Tom 'with an exquisite love of Life is in a lingering state.' It fell to John to take care of the dying Tom, but the youth's condition in June seemed good enough to allow John an absence, a tour in Scotland. The companion of that tour was Charles

Brown, and on the way north the two walkers passed through Wordsworth's country. Presently they were exploring the homes and haunts of Robert Burns. A rapid trip to Ireland was more expensive than they liked; and then they continued their main adventure, 'always moving' (so Brown wrote), 'moving from one place to another, like Dante's inhabitants of the Sulphur kingdom in search of cold ground,—prosing over the Map,—calculating—distances,—packing up knapsacks,—and paying bills.' But the tour would have had to be broken off even if Keats had not caught a violent cold in the Isle of Mull and received a doctor's orders to give up; for his brother's illness had become serious. The disappointed poet said goodbye to Brown and boarded a smack at Cromarty which took him to London Bridge in nine days. He arrived at Hampstead on 18 August, and ill as he was he devoted himself to nursing Tom. The end came on 1 December 1818, and Brown thereupon insisted that Keats should lodge with him at Wentworth Place.

Since Keats had travelled to Teignmouth for the sake of Tom he had not had much peace, but he had found the way to write or to begin several new poems of a high order. A project talked about between him and Reynolds was possibly never very firm; they thought of combining forces in a volume of tales in verse from Boccaccio's *Decameron*. Keats went so far as to complete one, *Isabella, or the Pot of Basil*, and Reynolds wrote two which have not enjoyed the same popularity. Another idea which was never to be fully enacted was a poem on *The Fall of Hyperion*, and Keats seems to have written a part of it in the summer of 1818, then left it to resume the composition in December. To 1818 belong a few pieces known as *Extracts from an Opera*, but the design has so far escaped further explanation, and the fragmentary *Castle Builder* ascribed to 1818 also is in the same obscurity. These brilliant experiments and others of the same date and feature may have been made to answer the urgings of Brown.

For Brown brought out the lighter side of Keats's character and writing. He was not the only one in the group to do so, but he had plenty of opportunity. In general Keats's friends, Leigh Hunt as well as the others, were given to comicality, and pun, epigram, witty songs and parodies multiplied at their meetings. The letters of Keats contain the essence of all this waggery, which, properly adapted, might be of use in entertaining the public—so it seemed in that age of theatrical burlesques and ingenious diversions.

In December 1818 the author of that too little read poem *Endymion*, writing a vast letter to George and Georgiana Keats in America,

ranged from grief and spiritual exercise to nonsense and caricature—and in all this there was one item of news which was more important than Keats then perceived. It was, briefly, that he was interested in Miss Brawne, and she was interested in him. The origin of their meetings was due to Brown's having let his house during his summer wanderings, to a widow, Mrs. Brawne, and she afterwards with her children remained in Hampstead. The elder daughter, Frances, aged eighteen, was described by Keats as 'beautiful and elegant, graceful, silly, fashionable and strange,' and then, she was 'ignorant, monstrous in her behaviour, flying out in all directions, calling people such names—that I was forced lately to make use of the term Minx.'

Other girls besides Fanny Brawne had made and still could make an impression on Keats, as his poems apart from his letters show clearly enough. He was something of a Robert Herrick among the rosebuds, and was nevertheless shy and serious. His brother and sister must have read about the advent of Miss Brawne with a smile or two, for a little earlier they had been reading John's interesting pages on the beautiful East Indian cousin of J. H. Reynolds. 'She is not a Cleopatra, but she is at least a Charmian.' This lady also was 'strange,' by which Keats evidently means exotic. 'You will by this time think I am in love with her; so before I go any further I will tell you I am not—she kept me awake one Night as a tune of Mozart's might do.' But after this Jane Cox vanishes from the surviving records of Keats's feelings.

7: *The Year 1819*

The map of Keats's travels and stopping-places in his native country is quite a full one, his short life being remembered, and the year 1819 took him to several new scenes which he was happy in, and which gave him poetical circumstances. His friend Dilke had his old home in Chichester, then one of the least altered of small cathedral cities, and Brown and he visited there in January. They were also guests of Dilke's relatives at Bedhampton some miles westward from Chichester. The holiday must have played its part in the writing of one more tale in verse, and a conspicuously beautiful one, *The Eve of St. Agnes*.

The second of Keats's main excursions in 1819 began early in July. The place first chosen was Shanklin in the Isle of Wight, and the friend with him was James Rice ('unfortunately labouring under a complaint which has for some years been a burthen to him.') Keats's purpose at Shanklin was not only to luxuriate in the rural and marine

scenery but to write. Once again there was a story in rhyme to be told, namely, *Lamia*; and then the influence of Charles Brown had set Keats working in conjunction with him on a tragedy called *Otho the Great*. When Rice decided to move from Shanklin, not having had much benefit, the handy Brown joined Keats and pushed the tragedy along. Keats took his walks, but was a little disappointed: 'I may call myself an old stager in the picturesque, and unless it be something very large and overpowering I cannot receive any extraordinary relish.'

He was fain to find his imaginative life among his books, and the thought of having a library to revel and forage in grew upon him. He was going on with his *Hyperion*, and the big scale of this intended gallery of ancient mythology would necessitate more reading than his own travelling library supplied. It was in the hope of getting at books, and escaping from local smallnesses (not least cramping, 'my little coffin of a room' at Shanklin) that Keats agreed with Brown to make for Winchester. The effect was immediate. 'An exceeding pleasant town, enriched with a beautiful Cathedrall and surrounded by a fresh-looking country.' 'A large room, where I can promenade at my pleasure.' This was in August. Keats's passion to excel in literature flamed up, and his letters brightened with this revival. With zeal he blended cool reason, for he gave some of his time to studying Italian.

Sometimes the pleasure of being at Winchester and discovering good health was shadowed by a want of money, but Taylor and Hessey were still willing in spite of their losses over *Endymion* to advance a bank-note. It was October before Keats ended his stay in Winchester, not yet having found the first charm of the city quite to die away; and he returned to London in the intention of 'being in the reach of Books' which after all Winchester had denied him. The question of employment was not only one of imaginative activity; Keats had in view the process, so often tried by young poets, of making a modest income by literary journalism.

Such, then, were Keats's principal absences from Hampstead and London during 1819. Often when he thought over his situation he looked beyond both his native regions and the writer's round in London. His letters reveal this. Now he gets no further than Edinburgh in his reverie—he will take up his medical studies there: and now his notion is to serve as a ship's doctor, 'voyaging to and from India for a few years.' We hear also of an inclination (as in Byron's instance) towards South America. Indeed he was never able to fix on one of these half-schemes for long; he writes on the last day of

May to Miss Jeffrey of Teignmouth mentioning his perplexity, but soon remarks, 'I would rather conquer my indolence and strain my nerves at some grand Poem, than be in a dunderheaded Indiaman.' He also asks Miss Jeffrey to look for lodgings for him near Teignmouth, and one does not know if he really means that. Miss Jeffrey seems to hope that he does, and quickly sends her suggestions, with her disapproval of any East Indiaman vagaries.

It is not until 1 July 1819 that we see Keats, displayed in his own letters, as completely attached to one object—and that was Fanny Brawne. About this self-surrender he is in no doubt, but he is in agonizing doubt concerning Fanny, whom we have seen he thought of in the first place as a creature of unpredictable opposites. 'I am distracted with a thousand thoughts,' he writes to her that July. She has accepted him as a lover, but the character which he claims for himself without hesitation, the poetic character is not one to which Miss Brawne is perceptibly drawn, and he must compete with others who have much more of the world of her fancies and admirations in them. His early letters to her are profuse with his special ardour of topic and language, and what was it all to her? 'You see how I go on—like so many strokes of a Hammer. I cannot help it—I am impell'd, driven to it.'

Exhausted almost by his own uneasy joy, so near to the madness of jealousy, Keats resolved to look for peace of mind when he got back to London from Winchester by taking rooms away from Hampstead and settling to the business of writing in periodicals like *Hunt* or *Hazlitt*. But the resolution was erased in a moment by one happy day of reunion with Fanny. Dilke's troubles in finding the rooms in Westminster was to little purpose, and the poet was quickly in his old surrounding and undergoing all that love could do to him in Fanny's immediate neighbourhood. The illness which he had staved off was not capable of concealment, and must have been one of the reasons why Mrs. Brawne, well as she liked Keats, looked upon the love affair with her daughter as a perilous thing. It may have been in the belief that 'good prospects' would make the marriage much more acceptable, as well as reasonable, in her eyes that in December 1819 Keats temporarily favoured a plan of business in Mr. Abbey's concern. Tea Brokerage assumed quite an attractive colouring. But Keats was Keats, and a few days afterwards the radiance had fled.

We have had glimpses of his poetical energy in 1819, and so far as Keats was a reckoner of importance in that matter the important essays have been mentioned. That is to say, he believed in long

poems, as so many did at the time. But his year of trials had also impelled him to write a series of shorter poems which today rival his bigger designs in their qualities and their honours. He was a reader of Horace, whose glory is so predominantly that of his concise Odes, and of Spenser and Dryden, of Pope, Gray and Collins, of Wordsworth and Coleridge and many more whose example commended the same or a similar form and method. In or about May 1819 Keats wrote three Odes which everybody knows: *To Psyche*, *To a Nightingale*, *On a Grecian Urn*. The year also brought him his Ode *On Melancholy*, and while he was at Winchester he wrote what is conceivably the best loved of all these pieces, *To Autumn*. These Odes vary among themselves as their subjects do, and yet they have a common characteristic or two: they each present an idea, an intellectual determination, and they are all written with the principle of artistic economy—'infinite riches in a little room.'

In a manner these Odes are the counter-attack of Keats's poetry against his passion of love. Here he is able to contemplate even Fanny Brawne and John Keats, with whatever sweetness or bitterness arose from their relation, as details, transcended by the whole nature of eternal truths. The poems may be biographical, but that depends on the way in which they are read; if it is their pathos which we would discover in full, they may be related to actualities, even to Horace's odes in Keats's mind when brooding over the chances that Fanny might have to take more lovers than one. The wasting countenance of Tom Keats looks through some of the phrases, if we choose to see it. The figure of Keats himself attentive to Haydon among the British Museum antiquities from Greece, or pausing alone before some silent sculpture, is likely to accompany the interpretation of the Grecian Urn. And yet the total effect of the Odes is beyond the dates, places, contributory personalia. They are the register of an ascent into a great calm, the freedom of the spirit at least strong in the knowledge of certain immortal and flawless existences. The something that infects the world, even in the fairest shapes and sunniest encounters, is left afar off.

There are in addition obvious biographical poems by Keats in 1819 to make clear a difference in kind. *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* is a doubtful case, and one word from the author on his own reading of it would be invaluable. He might of course assert that it was to him a fairy tale, for a poet need not be his own psycho-analyst. But the Ode *To Fanny* is practically one more of his overwhelming letters to that gay young lady. She is going to a dance, and he cannot; he sees her among the cavaliers—at any rate, we may assume the artillery

officers—and is terrified. Women are light as thistle-down 'and to know it is despair.' The poem is vivid with startling and miscellaneous imagery, but it belongs to the level of the weariness, the fever and the fret, *here...*

The Eve of Saint Agnes has been noted as a poem of the beginning of 1819, and another tale in verse was begun soon after on another hint from the calender. Such subjects were in favour in Keats's time, when books on the days of the year and their particular traditions and natural-history background were growing popular. They were convenient remembrances of romantic and mediaeval myth or fact. Sir Walter Scott had appropriated 'The Eve of Saint John' for a Scotch ballad, but Keats in his poem on Saint Agnes and tradition relating to her Eve was far more of the painter of the Middle Ages in their living abundance, and turning to 'The Eve of Saint Mark' he again dwelt with enchantment on mediaevalism. Not that the supposed date of the action is ancient; it may well be 1819 itself. 'I think it will give you the sensation of walking about an old country town in a coolish evening.' There Keats acknowledges that the action was still to be devised, and he deserted the fragment without ever managing to find the story. Before leaving the subject, it is just to revert to Scott; since after all Keats knew *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*. There in fact is the model:

'Twas All-souls eve, and Surrey's heart beat high;
He heard the midnight bell with anxious start,
Which told the mystic hour, approaching nigh,
When wise Cornelius promised, by his art,
To show to him the ladye of his heart,
Albeit betwixt them roared the ocean grim...

Keats far outgoes Scott in his romantic and picturesque evocations; but the story was after all the great thing, if he meant to live by poetical publications from the house of Taylor and Hessey in 1819—and Scott had a tale to tell.

Even Taylor and Hessey in 1819 were shaken by the agitations and random conduct of their young hero, who after all was preparing a new book and in sober truth was in need of a public for it. At one point he maintained that *The Eve of Saint Agnes* and *Lamia* together would suffice as the principal contents of this momentous volume. But he handed in a version of the first-named narrative which, to the astonishment of his rather slower sympathiser Woodhouse, contained a description of the consummation of desire between Porphyro and Medeline. Casanova's style was utterly out

of the scope of Taylor and Hessey's imprint; they were men of religion; and their list was black with broadcloth. Taylor would have none of the nonsense, and insisted on the excision of the erotic stanzas. Woodhouse might say they were after all very clever, but—, and Keats on second thoughts gave up the attempt, while the firm went on arranging his next book along safer and wider lines.

No extended account of Keats would be justified if it said nothing of one of the most picturesque incidents in the daily story of English poetry. For a year or two before 1819 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the author of much that Keats had read from lyrical ballads to critical disquisitions, had been in retirement at Highgate, on the far side of Hampstead Heath from Wentworth Place. Coleridge may have been told of, must have read about the poet of *Endymion*. The incident was quickly recorded by that poet:—'Last Sunday (an April day) I took a walk towards Highgate and in the lane that winds by the side of Lord Mansfield's park (Ken Wood) I met Mr. Green our instructor at Guy's in conversation with Coleridge—I joined them, after enquiring by a look whether it would be agreeable—I walked with him at his alderman-after-dinner pace for near two miles I suppose. In those two miles he broached a thousand things—let me see if I can give you a list—Nightingales, Poetry—on Poetical Sensation—Metaphysics—Different genera and species of Dreams—Nightmare—a dream accompanied by a sense of touch—Single and double touch—A dream related—First and second consciousness—Monsters—the Kraken—Mermaids—Southey believes in them—Southey's belief too much diluted—A Ghost story—Good morning—I heard his voice as he came towards me—I heard it as he moved away—I had heard it all the interval, if it may be called so. He was civil enough to ask me to call on him at Highgate.'

Young poets are busy people, and Keats never made that call. Coleridge, who would not misunderstand that, was not so unobservant of his chance-met reader as the description just given might mean. Thirteen years after, in the course of conversation at Highgate, he was reminded by something concerning a young artist lately dead. He said (if his nephew noted him rightly): 'A loose, slack, not well-dressed youth met Mr. Green and myself in a lane near Highgate. Green knew him, and spoke. It was Keats. He was introduced to me, and stayed a minute or so. After he had left us a little way, he came back and said: "Let me carry away the memory, Coleridge, of having pressed your hand!" I said to Green, when Keats was gone; yet this was, I believe, before the consumption showed itself distinctly.'

8: The Third Volume

Though Keats in 1819 was so often ill, it was not suspected by his friends in the ordinary way that his time was short. He hurried about among them with deceiving vitality, though he professed to be bored with the perpetual sameness of their conversation. In January 1820 he welcomed his brother George on a brief visit, which was to be to his disadvantage, for George was in need of funds and returned with all that he could claim or borrow from their family resources. Even in his letter to George's wife that month Keats is reserved—for him—and says nothing of Fanny Brawne. 'As I intend to retire into the Country where there will be no sort of news, I shall not be able to write you very long letters—besides I am afraid the postage comes to too much; which till now I have not been aware of.' It was not long afterwards that a coatless ride through a damp night on top of the Hampstead stage brought on a fit of coughing, and looking at a drop of blood on his bed he said, 'That is my death-warrant.'

The orders were that Keats should remain indoors, and there he stayed for weeks, with the promise that the prescribed rest and meagre diet would put him right. It was nearly April before he could go out, and it was perhaps only the wish to encourage a friend that made him visit the town then; Haydon's large painting 'Christ's Entry into Jerusalem' was on private view in Piccadilly on 25 March. Hopes and disappointments came rapidly on. Brown was going by sea to Scotland, and, people said, it would do Keats good to share the voyage. But Keats had to abandon the plan, though he sailed with his friend as far as Gravesend. He also had to move out of Wentworth Place, which Brown was letting for the summer, and he found rooms at Kentish Town. There he had the Leigh Hunts as his neighbours, and after a time they anxiously invited him into their home; Keats went. Some weeks of quite pleasant nursing followed, but one day a servant who was under notice played a trick on Mrs. Leigh Hunt which concerned a letter from Fanny Brawne to her lover—and Keats departed despite every explanation and entreaty.

The note which Keats sent to Hunt later made up for the painful little calamity. 'You will be glad to hear I am going to delay a little time at Mrs. Brawne's. I hope to see you whenever you can get time for I feel really attached to you for your many sympathies with me, and patience at my luns.' Thus Keats had proved to him-

self that, however Hunt's dogmatizings and sentimentalisms or his domestic circle might be detested by other persons of their old circle, Hunt was in himself, an 'affectionate friend,' when it was a question of life and death.

The 'many sympathies' included all kinds of literature, and Hunt at that time was gradually becoming less of an amateur politician and more of a popular apostle of prose and verse by the best writers. He was editing a weekly journal modest in appearance but memorable in content, called *The Indicator*, and Keats, who had been a little remote latterly from such matters, gave him some help with jokes and unpublished poems. Since 1819 he had not written many lines of poetry,—it was one of the things the doctors disallowed. Perhaps the last thing on which he worked was the fairy-tale or burlesque entitled *The Cap and Bells*, which he lent to Hunt for a quotation in an essay on 'Coaches' indebted otherwise, I suspect, to the humour of Keats.

The Indicator of 2 August and that of the following week were wholly given to 'an account of another new publication,' and Hunt observed that this was suitable to the paper's object which was now and then 'to relate the stories of old times.' The book was Keats's third and last volume, *Lamia, Isabella, &c.*, one of the principal new works from English poets in 1820 and over many a year. Wordsworth, Shelley, Reynolds and John Clare also happened to bring out noteworthy volumes in 1820, and Charles Lamb began to publish his 'Elia' in the *London Magazine*. But *Lamia, Isabella* was a culmination of beautiful early poetics. It was not a ponderous volume; it comprised three stories—one may call them all love stories—in melodious verse, a group of Odes, a few effusions of a lighter and mixed style—these could be termed 'causeries,'—and a fragment of an epic. These writings have been mentioned already. Though Keats had written and his friends had transcribed many sonnets, none of these was used; possibly it was judged that the sonnet had been too often profaned and would merely provoke the ungenerous critic.

Living poets usually act as the editors of their books, but Keats's illness increased the ambition of Woodhouse and Taylor to serve Keats in that capacity. Apart from omissions they did not do it badly. The aim was to present a volume as nearly faultless in poetry and as attractive in human interest as Keats's manuscripts would yield. Such meanderings and lapses of associative expression as *Endymion* had set before the envious must be sought here in vain. If the classical scholar was its critic the new book ought to please by its dignity and coherence, and by the philosophic directions clear;

followed by the poet in his enthusiasm. In the *Grecian Urn* the Greek mind was illustrated, and *Lamia* was a fable engaged with the theme that cynicism is deadly, that cold science is an enemy to the flower of life. Probably Woodhouse and Taylor both looked to the universities as they selected the 1820 volume. Even *To Autumn* has been compared to Theocritus's idylls, and indeed it is not a poem on agricultural England at the season but a song of deities and metamorphosed husbandmen.

To be austere in poetry and yet to keep high colouring and variety of appeal to the senses and the mind—that was Keats's study. In the summer of 1820 he received a handsomely expressed invitation from Shelley in Italy, to which some talk on poetry was added; and he then answered with spirit, gratefully though provisionally accepting the invitation, and replying to the poetical notes. Discipline, he declared, was what Shelley the poet lacked, and there was too much publication of verse from him; his own 1820 volume, which he sent, was mostly made up of poems written two years or more earlier, and even then they would have remained at home for new inspection by the author 'but for hope of gain.' Shelley was much struck by the finer taste of Keats's book, but paid less attention to the Odes than one would have expected, losing himself in some measure in his glorification of *Hyperion*. He pursued (postally or in person) all his friends with the news of this superlative piece—and it shows what prejudice Keats's poems had to meet when we discover T. L. Peacock's retort to Shelley, his honoured friend. Peacock said that he should never read *Hyperion* if he had centuries in which to do so.

But the periodical critics did not hurl out many insults of that sort. They were not all as gentle as Lamb, anonymously, in a morning paper, (and Lamb must have gone out of his way to write that notice of a young poet.) The most strenuous review of an impartial sort appeared in the *London Magazine* for September. The writer had it in his mind to deal with *Blackwood's* and the *Quarterly* as he estimated Keats, and also to run out the *Examiner* for 'false philosophy'; he therefore pointed out what he called flippancy and corrupt ideas in the new book itself. The treatment of the two brothers in *Isabella*, with their alleged horrible commercialism, was contrasted with Boccaccio's evolution of 'Italian revenge.' But the reviewer went on to enjoy. He too marvelled at *Hyperion*—'one of the most extraordinary creations of any modern imagination.' He accepted the publishers' statement (it was not the poet's) that the reception of *Endymion* had discouraged Keats from proceeding with his epic, and turned to Mr. Croker of the *Quarterly*: 'See what you have done.'

It is in order here to comment on the true history of *Hyperion*. Keats rightly or wrongly claimed that it was not written in its first form with directness; it was an imitation. 'Miltonic verse can not be written but in an artful or rather artist's humour.' He therefore gave it up by September 1819. And yet, could all that vision and harmony be merely dismissed from his days? Among his latest and saddest strivings we therefore find *The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream*, which in its turn was never completed, but which attempts to convey a poet's thoughts on the mystery of the poet's world. It is curious that although in part this later production is a weakening of the first, the age we live in can get at it with greater understanding than the Miltonic version. The whole work of Keats contains no lines that strike home now more powerfully, or with so much urgent significance, than

*The poet and the dreamer are distinct,
Diverse, sheer opposite, antipodes.
The one pours out a balm upon the world,
The other vexes it.*

9: A Poet's Death

In Keats's letters of the later summer, 1820, his book and its fortunes make no great figure. By mid-August he was assured that his only hope of surviving awhile rested on his being sent to Italy. It was not any brighter because he had been left in money difficulties through the requirements of George, now back at Louisville; moreover, Brown was away, and who would go with Keats if Brown did not? As for the money, John Taylor acted ably and liberally, and brought together loans and presents enough for the first part of Keats's exile. Woodhouse promised to meet future demands, though 'I am sure you would not needlessly call upon me' was a little chilling. As for the travelling companion, it is possible that at one moment Keats even imagined that Fanny would come; but Thornton Hunt says that 'punctilio' held her back, and even the thought must have been kept desperately private. By very good luck the vacancy was filled. Joseph Severn had at this time the opportunity of joining the British artists in Rome, on the strength of a Royal Academy award. He was asked by William Haslam if he would make the voyage with Keats, and in a few days Severn began it. One who knew the poet and the painter said that Severn 'possessed all that could recommend him for a companion—old acquaintanceship, great animal spirits, active tenderness, and a mind capable of appreciating that of the poet.'

The ship was the *Maria Crowther*, and she sailed from London on 18 September. Contrary winds delayed her in the Channel and Keats was able to go ashore and visit Dilke's relations at Bedhampton; but his last footsteps on English ground were at Lulworth, still later. The Bay of Biscay showed something of its temper, but the *Maria Crowther* with her invalid passengers (for Keats was not the only one) reached Naples in little more than a month. Keats's power of writing had now decreased to almost nothing except that he could still fill a letter in something of his vigorous and sketching way; but that seldom. After quarantine in the Bay of Naples and some days of kindness from English residents they travelled to Rome, where Keats presented a letter of introduction to a physician already becoming eminent, James Clark. The doctor had taken lodgings for them where Englishmen frequently came—at 26 Piazza di Spagna, a house now maintained as a memorial to Keats and Shelley. It was now November. Keats went for walks, and read a little; he even spoke of writing a poem on Sabrina (the river-goddess of the Severn.) Dr. Clark gave him some reason to think that he might recover. But a letter to Brown just admitting this light, dated 30 November, is thought to be the last that Keats wrote. In December his malady grew violent. He demanded laudanum, but Severn advised Christian resignation; and Keats turned to Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living and Holy Dying* (lent by Clark) as one of his latest readings. Severn played to him (for they had hired a piano) out of his old favourite Haydn's sonatas.

Though Keats avoided reading a letter from Fanny he kept souvenirs of her at hand in his last afflictions. The year 1821 opened, and surprisingly he was still alive, but studying Dr. Clark's face as if hoping to read the order of release there. In February he had a sudden hunger for many books 'and for three days this charm lasted on him.' On the 14th he said that on his grave he would wish the inscription 'Here lies one whose name was writ in water,' but not his name. Severn himself was reduced to a shadow by the strain of watching, but a nurse was found. It was in Severn's arms that Keats died, as if sleeping, on the afternoon of 23 February 1821, and he had seen the moment arriving with the words 'Don't be frightened. Thank God it has come.'

Casts of Keats's head, hand and foot were taken before his body was interred where he had hoped, in the Protestant Cemetery then quite new near the Pyramid of Caius Cestius. The thought that the violets which Severn said grew so wonderfully there would grow over him was in a sense his own elegy or his last poem, for 'violets were his favourite flowers.'

10 : The Poet's Name

Keats's history cannot be closed precisely with his death and burial, for his genius was still to find its way out of the papers he had left and the book as yet known to a small public, and again out of the memories and admirations of private friends, into the general heart of men. One man who knew him less well than others of the circle was probably the most intense in his desire to see Keats vindicated and exalted in England. This was Shelley. He also was destined for an early death. When (in 1822) he was drowned, Shelley was still meditating a prose memoir of Keats and an essay on his poetry, but he had achieved the elegy *Adonais* which was a sufficient bible from one writer. Keats had adjured him recently to be an artist, and *Adonais* was fittingly a sumptuous work of art as well as a creed of the immortal splendour of the sons of light. It has more concerning Keats's individuality in it that sometimes is perceived, but it never could be the sort of memorial which Shelley proposed to fashion in prose; and it outsoars all such biographies.

The intimate friends of Keats could not agree among themselves on the right of supplying the authoritative biography or editing the remains of their lost *Adonais*. John Taylor was the soundest possibility, but he lacked some approaches to Keats and his self-importance, real or fancied, irritated the other claimants. Charles Brown knew a great deal, and was a practised though casual writer, but his temperament scarcely made him the right man for the sensitive inner story to be told. Reynolds was capricious and unlikely to do just to others concerning their part in Keats's life, most of all to Fanny Brawne, 'that idle thing of Woman Kind.' In brief, dissensions soon arose and the years went by with nothing much to show—except *Adonais*, and that was a rare book until Shelley's poems appeared in a popular form.

When they did so, it was in a Paris edition (1829) from the still flourishing firm of Galignani, and in the same large volume with the poems of Coleridge and of Keats himself. The Galignani editions of British authors were inexpensive and intelligently prepared, and were widely circulated. To the poems of Keats a memoir was prefixed, largely complaining against the reviewers who had supposedly hastened his end, (and Byron's allusion in *Don Juan* had given this story an immense currency). This Galignani edition was merely a reprint of the poems in Keats's three volumes and his other pieces and his letters remained unknown. How they should be

brought out while quarrels over the ownership increased was hard to decide.

In 1828 Leigh Hunt's unlucky book *Lord Byron and Some of his Contemporaries* gave the world the best account of Keats in life, together with selections from his poetry, that was yet available. It ran to forty pages, and was enriched with an engraving of the picture by Severn in which Keats has the 'eagle eyes' he imagined as distinguishing the face of Cortez. Hunt also gave one of Keats's letters, which must have informed many readers what a picturesque and cordial correspondence was waiting for future printing. I shall transcribe Hunt's concluding paragraph: 'So much for the mortal life of as true a man of genius as these latter times have seen; one of those who are too genuine and too original to be properly appreciated at first, but whose time for applause will infallibly arrive with the many, and has already begun in all poetical quarters. I venture to prophesy, as I have done elsewhere, that Mr. Keats, will be known here-after in English literature, emphatically, as *the Young Poet*; and that his volumes will be the sure companions, in field and grove, of all those who know what a luxury it is to hasten, with a favourite volume against one's heart, out of the strife of commonplaces into the haven of solitude and imagination.'

In 1836 the first *History of the English Language and Literature*, by Robert Chambers, appeared as an educational handbook. Shelley is there, and Keats is there. By this time the poetry of Keats was familiar in several examples to 'the many,' since anthologists and naturalists, rural writers and miscellanists were again and again drawing upon it. Not to multiply instances, we may think of Alexander Dyce's choice anthology of sonnets (1833) where Keats's poem on Chapman's Homer is reprinted 'from *Poems*, 1817,—the earliest publication of this extraordinary young man, whose genius must be acknowledged even by those readers, who are not satisfied with the correctness of his taste.' In John Aitken's *The Cabinet* (1831) we see *The Eve of Saint Agnes* entire; in William Howitt's *Rural Life of England* (1838) we read that Theocritus's 'description of an ancient drinking-cup appears to me to have no rival in all the round of literature, ancient or modern, except Keats's description of an antique vase.' Thousands of these details might be collected to show how, despite the obstacles to full publication, Keats's poetry was moving among the minds of quiet readers while his grave was new.

In 1840 new editions of his usual poems began to appear; soon afterwards Leigh Hunt's acclaimed book *Imagination and Fancy* did one more service to his friend's name; and then in 1848 a pair of

volumes edited by the poet and leader of society R. M. Milnes inaugurated a new period in the appreciation of John Keats. *The Life and Remains of John Keats* was not all that it might have been, but it brought in many memories of Keats from those who knew him, it added to his known poems, and it opened the door of his own study and his character by the printing of some of his letters. The appeal was to the intellectual world and the new generation, accustomed to abstract ideas—to the day of Ruskin and Carlyle, to reasoners like Matthew Arnold and Charlotte Brontë. Here again much could—and has been—compiled and discussed. Keats was henceforth acknowledged not only as a poet but (if this can truly be a distinction) as an original thinker; and, to a great extent, the theme disseminated by Shelley, Byron, Hazlitt and others that he was at the mercy of block-headed reviewers was diminished. So at the same time that *Jane Eyre* and *Stones of Venice* were being argued over in drawing-rooms and quadrangles, the spirit of Keats was freshly invoked; and naturally we find his praise beautifully and fearlessly sung for instance in Mrs. Browning's daring poem *Aurora Leigh*.

11: *Thoughts on Keats's Genius*

Not everybody formed the same opinion of Keats upon the evidence disclosed by Milnes as Mrs. Browning did; and, since he can afford to be examined from all points of view, we may look at the criticism written in 1849 by Coleridge's daughter Sara to Aubrey de Vere, who was Keats's eulogist. He had published an article on 'Tennyson, Shelley and Keats.' Her comment included this: 'You are more displeased with Shelley's *wrong* religion than with Keats's *no* religion. That very deficiency in the mind of Keats, which prevented him from being a very good man, and must, I think, for ever prevent him from taking the highest rank as a poet,—want of power or inclination to dwell on the intellectual side of things or the spiritual organized in the intellect as soul in body, or indeed to embrace things belonging to the understanding at all,—do you contrive to represent in the light of a very sublime, angelical, seraphical characteristic. . . . But is it not the fact, and a painful truth which must forcibly strike every reader of Keats's letters and life, together with the mass of his poetry, that Keats never dwelt upon the great exalting themes which concern our higher peace, in any shape or form? . . . Shelley, in his wild way, was a philanthropist; Keats was social, but the same spirit which led him to turn away from earnest questions which agitate the religious world, which agitated Augustine and Pelagius,

Luther and Calvin, Hooker and Taylor, some of the greatest and best men that ever have lived, rendered him careless of promoting the good of mankind, or any but those individual felicities of the passing hour which added to his own earthly sensational enjoyment.'

Victorian as that may sound, it is the same old protest that Wordsworth had summed up to Keats himself in the word 'Paganism,' and there may be something in it when we contemplate the work of Keats in its full range and ask if it misses any noble conception which other illustrious poets have in theirs. If there is, it is something concerning the soul. All that I need say further, should that much be sustained when we think of the great hymns of the world in comparison with Keats's Odes, is that he died young, and even so his poetry was contracted and then cut out altogether by an accumulation of miseries, some time before his extinction. Mrs. Coleridge's reference to Jeremy Taylor is curious when we recall Keats's familiarity with Taylor's prose and his search for a kindly light in *Holy Living and Holy Dying* at the end of his course. Moreover Keats himself observed, as he asked for that book in his extremity, that he could see how the Christian faith was Severn's strength, and Taylor's might by his own comfort.

If it was not for Keats to speak out on the text 'The world is charged with the glory of God,' he was alive in a special degree to the glory as such. His writing is illumination, much of it, enwreathing every object and appearance in the year's round which he can think of, and at least his youthful fancy regards all these as 'Apollo's glories.' He is an unabashed lover of the physical or sensuous part of earthly existence, and reports it anew or sometimes for the first time in English poetry with great happiness. In his enthusiasm he may occasionally go too fast to be literally accurate, where he is announcing the many wonders he has seen in external nature; or else his romantic purpose mingles with his representation. 'Thus,' wrote Phil Robinson in *The Poets and Nature*, 'Keats in fancy has a "golden" butterfly, but it was born of a flower, a fairy insect, and led Endymion to strange and sweet adventure.' The same observer classes Keats with Marvel and Shelley as always 'delightfully in sympathy with the spirit, if not always the letter, of nature's doings.'

Perceiving at an early stage that observation is mere information unless delivered in words of peculiar strength and tone, and rejoicing at the triumphant instances of such impressive speech in earlier and in contemporary poets, Keats acquired and put into force a wide, distinct and progressive vocabulary. It was assembled not only from his reading but from the language of real life as he knew

it,—and the colloquial is always risky in poetry. Accordingly he like Leigh Hunt and even Coleridge leaves some passages of incongruous style; or perhaps a single word cannot shed its trivial usage, as in his musical but slightly worked stanzas of 'drear-nighted December' and the brook in that month: when

*Thy bubblings ne'er remember
Apollo's summer look;
But with a sweet forgetting
They stay their crystal fretting,
Never, never petting
About the frozen time.*

Often he invents, and if he is unsuccessful (with an adjective like 'psalterian') one may see that his motive was poetical. He seeks for the quality of the thing in the feeling of the word.

Great play was made by his enemies and those of the school of Leigh Hunt against any mistakes of judgment in this business of a lively and copious diction. It is agreed however that he attained a mastery of it and could write at last both originally, richly and completely, thanks to his recognizing that words are the biggest problem of all imaginative communication. He discovered the great secret of all, that the simple style is the essential, though it cannot stand alone, and lines like the following achieve the permanent:

*The town, the churchyard, and the setting sun,
The clouds, the trees, the rounded hills all seem,
Though beautiful, cold,—strange, as in a dream
I dreamed long ago, now new begun;*

or these in another dream-connected sonnet.

*Not unto Ida with its snow-cold skies,
Nor unto Tempe where Jove dreamed a day,
But to that second circle of sad hell,
Where 'mid the gust, the whirlwind, and the flaw
Of rain and hailstones, lovers need not tell
Their sorrows. Pale were the sweet lips I saw,
Pale were the lips I kissed, and fair the form
I floated with, about that melancholy storm.*

But always we look to him for the distillation of the poetical in a verb or adjective, his 'syren-trumpets,' 'embalmed darkness,' 'severe magnificence.'

Much of Keats's time was occupied in disputation with friends on

with anybody who reads upon the poetic art, and how to write great verse. It is to be remembered that he was brought up when English poetry was still carefully classed in several kinds with their usual forms, and the hold of certain metrical arrangements was very great. He modified some of them beautifully, but was not (as far as we trace him) a startling metrical innovator. He had still to think as audaciously on this part of poetics as he thought on words and phrases. What he might do in freshness of rhythm is suggested by the ballad *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*. He was moved by the musical airs he heard, and has made some lyrics correspond with those melodies; along that path he might have travelled far.

Keats, as Sara Coleridge allowed, was social; and the social hour called on him for many impromptus and trifles. They are to be taken biographically rather than as his poetical works. His reputation in the family circle was such that he readily granted the desire, spoken or implied, that he should entertain with his merry or ironical rhymes. Like other men of genius he probably deferred more exhausting writing which was present to his conscience while he pleased others with these labours of idleness. It is remarkable that his friend Reynolds never solved the problem of being one of two things—the wit and jongleur, or the poet; and Thomas Hood, one of Keats's first disciples, was in much the same case. Keats once had the notion of writing a comic novel and even of making Leigh Hunt a character in it; we may have lost by his untimely death both a poet with a mighty criticism of life to develop and a humorist in the way of Thackeray or Dickens.

But then, we have seen that the actual invention of a story to tell was his difficulty even while he was bent on composing tales in verse. The same thing must have worried him if a little encouragement had induced him to pursue a great wish further—the wish to write plays. But Keats was a genuine reader of history and a lover of heroes and among his books he had plenty of biography of men of action to supply his plots. Alcibiades, as one of his letters hints, would have made a subject for him.

Reflections like these are permissible where the effective life of a poet comes to a close at the age of twenty-four, a life moreover where little was ever settled for long, and in which even the shelf of books was an uncertain provision. What Keats, now edited so often by the ablest collectors of every scrap, succeeded in writing, has distinguished him as the poet of the beautiful—and some will say that the beautiful as once men defined it or accepted its presence is not what a modern civilisation turns to. The paradox has gained

ground; what Woodhouse saw as a mirror of beauty, the poetry of Keats, may be thought to be the glass of a conventional art. It was feared by Charles Lamb that the *Quarterly* criticism might portend a general attack on beauty symbolized by the moon in heaven. Now, even in this respect, Keats has something to say for himself, and if by nature and circumstance he long took words like 'gold' and 'silver' to be terms of beauty, he lived long enough to begin reconsidering. At least in the matter of his own poetry, he was growing suspicious of lavish fancy and 'gems', and the probability is that although he would scarcely have transferred his art to what in his time was cantoned off as ugliness and discord he would have made his poems out of less aesthetically approved materials.

The *London Magazine* scolded him in 1821 for obtruding into the tale of *Isabella* some stanzas of a revolutionary tinge. He was being political, not poetical—and his thought was subversive into the bargain:

*And for them many a weary hand did swelt
In torched mines and noisy factories,*

or, further on,

*For them the Ceylon diver held his breath,
And went all naked to the hungry shark;
For them his ears gush'd blood; for them in 'leath
The seal on the cold ice with piteous bark
Lay full of darts; for them alone did seethe
A thousand men in troubles wide and dark:
Half-ignorant, they turn'd an easy wheel
That set sharp racks at work, to pinch and peel.*

It is only an occasional passage, but an energetic and heartfelt one; and such utterances must be valued in themselves, with their date in mind, and noted as predictions of something that but for consumption and rapid death would have grown, and enlarged the already splendid scope of Keats's poetry. He had begun to tire of romantic festivity and 'all its sweets,' which glow and bloom on in his verse, and might make a different symphony of all with a 'triumph of life' in another view, not at all less worthy of his Muse. This, today, comes simply enough to a generation accustomed to poetry without her jewels.

EDMUND BLUNDEN

ADDENDUM

Blackwood's Magazine

AT the beginning of 1826 the Editor of *Blackwood's Magazine* used the opportunity of a new volume's opening to review the principles, the emergencies and the conduct of that periodical. He exulted in his claim that 'we *did* smash that pestilent sect,' the Cockney School, — 'a baser crew never was spewed over literature.' But of course there had been nothing personal: 'our hatred and disgust to these scribblers, was political and literary. How, in fact, could it be personal, against men whom we never saw, and who moved in such a sphere of life as to render it impossible for us to meet them?'

However, the death of John Keats and what was being said still in 1826 about the contributory cause of offensive criticism must have troubled the writer. Since the Magazine cannot now be consulted without some labour, and the passage in question is practically unknown, I transcribe it here, moreover, it displays very well the temper in which Keats and his friends were publicly battered again and again, notwithstanding the professions of underlying benevolence.

'Without wishing to misrepresent the character of any one of our Contemporaries, we simply ask, which of them have treated unobtrusive and modest merit with half the kindness of that bloody-minded hobgoblin—Blackwood's Magazine?

'With some two or three writers of more than ordinary genius, or talent, or taste, we alone have dealt either with common sense or common feeling. We may mention three—Keats, Shelley, Procter. Keats possessed from nature some "fine powers", and that was the very expression we used in the first critique that ever mentioned his name. We saw, however, with mixed feelings of pity, sorrow, indignation, and contempt, that he was on the road to ruin. He was a Cockney, and Cockneys claimed him for their own. Never was there a young man so encrusted with conceit. He added new treasures to his mother-tongue,—and what is worse, he outhunted Hunt in a species of emasculated pruriency, that, although invented in Little Britain (Reynolds's family lived there), looks as if it were the

product of some imaginative Eunuch's muse within the melancholy inspiration of the Haram. Besides, we know that the godless gang were flattering him into bad citizenship, and wheedling him out of his Christian faith. In truth, they themselves broke the boy's heart, and blasted all his prospects. We tried to save him by wholesome and severe discipline—they drove him to poverty, expatriation, and death. Then they howled out murder against, first the Quarterly Review, and then this Magazine. Heartless slaves! Did not John Hunt himself, even Prince John, publish, for the sake of filthy lucre, Byron's cutting sarcasms on poor Keats, after he was in his grave? Nay, did he not publish Byron's outrageous merriment on this very charge of murder?—an instance of heartless effrontery unparalleled since the Age of Bronze?

'We remember—we believe it was in John Scott's abuse of us—having it particularly bandied against us as a heinous crime that we had ventured to hint that Keats was an apothecary, and been jocose on his pestle and mortar. A sad offence! These people must be quite new in the world of wit. We thought all these common-places of quizzing were perfectly understood, and of course harmless. From long prescription in this style of writing, a lawyer is a rogue—a physician kills his patients—a parson has a round paunch—an alderman guttles and guzzles—an attorney is an arrant knave—and so on. What man of the least sense in these eminent professions, takes offence at these threadbare jests? Some of our jesters, it appears, could not resist the revival of the union of poetry and pharmacy in John Keats, as they had existed in Apollo, and made sorry jokes thereon. But for the spirit of exaggeration which has attended everything connected with our Magazine, this never would have been considered an offence'...

POEMS

PUBLISHED IN 1817

What more felicity can fall to creature,
Than to enjoy delight with liberty.
Fate of the Butterfly: SPENSER

Dedication

TO LEIGH HUNT, ESQ.

GLORY and loveliness have passed away;
For if we wander out in early morn,
No wreathed incense do we see upborne
Into the east, to meet the smiling day:
No crowd of nymphs soft voic'd and young, and gay,
In woven baskets bringing ears of corn,
Roses, and pinks, and violets, to adorn
The shrine of Flora in her early May.
But there are left delights as high as these,
And I shall ever bless my destiny,
That in a time, when under pleasant trees
Pan is no longer sought, I feel a free
A leafy luxury, seeing I could please
With these poor offerings, a man like thee.

Poems

LIKE the dedication sonnet, this sketch of a beautiful summer's day proclaims Keats's enthusiasm for the Greek mythology, and touches on some of the themes of his later poems; it was temporarily called 'Endymion.' The versification and the many feminine rhymes announce Keats's acceptance of the then recent revolt against the closed couplets which had been the rule in English poetry since Pope's day. The bright colouring or impressionism of the language is also in the spirit of the movement concerning which the best book of that time to consult is still Leigh Hunt's *Feast of the Poets*, 2nd edition, 1815.

'Places of nestling green for Poets made'.

Story of Rimini.

I STOOD tip-toe upon a little hill,
The air was cooling, and so very still,
That the sweet buds which with a modest pride
Pull droopingly, in slanting curve aside,
Their scanty leaved, and finely tapering stems,
Had not yet lost those starry diadems
Caught from the early sobbing of the morn.
The clouds were pure and white as flocks new shorn,
And fresh from the clear brook; sweetly they slept
On the blue fields of heaven, and then there crept
A little noiseless noise among the leaves,
Born of the very sigh that silence heaves:
For not the faintest motion could be seen
Of all the shades that slanted o'er the green.

There was wide wand'ring for the greediest eye,
To peer about upon variety;
Far round the horizon's crystal air to skim,
And trace the dwindled edgings of its brim;
To picture out the quaint, and curious bending
Of a fresh woodland alley, never ending;

Or by the bowery clefts, and leafy shelves,
Guess where the jaunty streams refresh themselves.
I gazed awhile, and felt as light, and free
As though the fanning wings of Mercury
Had played upon my heels: I was light-hearted,
And many pleasures to my vision started;
So I straightway began to pluck a posey
Of luxuries bright, milky, soft and rosy.

A bush of May flowers with the bees about them;
Ah, sure no tasteful nook would be without them;
And let a lush laburnum oversweep them,
And let long grass grow round the roots to keep them
Moist, cool and green; and shade the violets,
That they may bind the moss in leafy nets.

A filbert hedge with wild briar overtwined,
And clumps of woodbine taking the soft wind
Upon their summer thrones; there too should be
The frequent chequer of a youngling tree,
That with a score of light green brethren shoots
From the quaint mossiness of aged roots:
Round which is heard a spring-head of clear waters
Babbling so wildly of its lovely daughters
The spreading blue bells: it may haply mourn
That such fair clusters should be rudely torn
From their fresh beds, and scattered thoughtlessly
By infant hands, left on the path to die.

Open afresh your round of starry folds,
Ye ardent marigolds!
Dry up the moisture from your golden lids,
For great Apollo bids
That in these days your praises should be sung
On many harps, which he has lately strung;
And when again your dewiness he kisses,
Tell him, I have you in my world of blisses:
So haply when I rove in some far vale,
His mighty voice may come upon the gale.

Here are sweet peas, on tip-toe for a flight:
With wings of gentle flush o'er delicate white,

And taper fingers catching at all things,
To bind them all about with tiny rings.

Linger * awhile upon some bending planks
That lean against a streamlet's rushy banks,
And watch intently Nature's gentle doings:
They will be found softer than ring-dove's cooings.
How silent comes the water round that bend;
Not the minutest whisper does it send
To the o'erhanging sallows: blades of grass
Slowly across the chequer'd shadows pass.
Why, you might read two sonnets, ere they reach
To where the hurrying freshnesses aye preach
A natural sermon o'er their pebbly beds;
Where swarms of minnows show their little heads,
Staying their wavy bodies 'gainst the streams,
To taste the luxury of sunny beams
Temper'd with coolness. How they ever wrestle
With their own sweet delight, and ever nestle
Their silver bellies on the pebbly sand.
If you but scantily hold out the hand,
That very instant not one will remain;
But turn your eye, and they are there again.
The ripples seem right glad to reach those cresses,
And cool themselves among the em'rald tresses;
The while they cool themselves, they freshness give,
And moisture, that the bowery green may live:
So keeping up an interchange of favours,
Like good men in the truth of their behaviours.
Sometimes goldfinches one by one will drop
From low hung branches; little space they stop;
But sip, and twitter, and their feathers sleek;
Then off at once, as in a wanton freak:
Or perhaps, to show their black, and golden wings,

* Lord Houghton, without mentioning the source whence they were obtained, prints the following lines as 'another version.'

Linger awhile among some bending planks
That lean against a streamlet's daisied banks,
And watch intently Nature's gentle doings:
That will be found as soft as ringdoves' cooings.
The inward ear will hear her and be blest,
And tingle with a joy too light for rest.

Pausing upon their yellow flutterings.
Were I in such a place, I sure should pray
That nought less sweet, might call my thoughts away,
Than the soft rustle of a maiden's gown
Fanning away the dandelion's down;
Than the light music of her nimble toes
Patting against the sorrel as she goes.
How she would start, and blush, thus to be caught
Playing in all her innocence of thought.
O let me lead her gently o'er the brook,
Watch her half-smiling lips, and downward look;
O let me for one moment touch her wrist;
Let me one moment to her breathing list;
And as she leaves me may she often turn
Her fair eyes looking through her locks auburne.
What next? A tuft of evening primroses,
O'er which the mind may hover till it dozes;
O'er which it well might take a pleasant sleep,
But that 'tis ever startled by the leap
Of buds into ripe flowers; or by the flitting
Of diverse moths, that aye their rest are quitting;
Or by the moon lifting her silver rim
Above a cloud, and with a gradual swim
Coming * into the blue with all her light.
O Maker of sweet poets, dear delight
Of this fair world, and all its gentle livers;
Spangler of clouds, halo of crystal rivers,
Mingler with leaves, and dew and tumbling streams,
Closer of lovely eyes to lovely dreams,
Lover of loneliness, and wandering,
Of upcast eye, and tender pondering!
Thee must I praise above all other glories
That smile us on to tell delightful stories.
For what has made the sage or poet write
But the fair paradise of Nature's light?
In the calm grandeur of a sober line,
We see the waving of the mountain pine;
And when a tale is beautifully staid,
We feel the safety of a hawthorn glade:

* *Another version (Lord Houghton).*

Floating through space with ever-living eye,
The crowned queen of ocean and the sky.

When it is moving on luxurious wings,
The soul is lost in pleasant smotherings:
Fair dewy roses brush against our faces,
And flowering laurels spring from diamond vases;
O'er head we see the jasmine and sweet briar,
And bloomy grapes laughing from green attire;
While at our feet, the voice of crystal bubbles
Charms us at once away from all our troubles:
So that we feel uplifted from the world,
Walking upon the white clouds wreath'd and curl'd.
So felt he, who first told, how Psyche went
On the smooth wind to realms of wonderment;
What Psyche felt, and Love, when their full lips
First touch'd; what amorous, and fondling nips
They gave each other's cheeks; with all their sighs,
And how they kist each other's tremulous eyes:
The silver lamp,—the ravishment,—the wonder—
The darkness,—loneliness,—the fearful thunder;
Their woes gone by, and both to heaven upflown,
To bow for gratitude before Jove's throne.
So did he feel, who pulled the boughs aside,
That we might look into a forest wide,
To catch a glimpse of Fawns, * and Dryades
Coming with softest rustle through the trees;
And garlands woven of flowers wild, and sweet,
Upheld on ivory wrists, or sporting feet:
Telling us how fair, trembling Syrinx fled
Arcadian Pan, with such a fearful dread.
Poor nymph,—poor Pan,—how he did weep to find,
Nought but a lovely sighing of the wind
Along the reedy stream; a half heard strain,
Full of sweet desolation—balmy pain.

What first inspired a bard of old to sing
Narcissus pining o'er the untainted spring?
In some delicious ramble, he had found
A little space, with boughs all woven round;
And in the midst of all, a clearer pool
Than e'er reflected in its pleasant cool,
The blue sky here, and there, serenely peeping
Through tendril wreaths fantastically creeping.

* The spelling of the edition of 1817

And on the bank a lonely flower he spied,
A meek and forlorn flower, with naught of pride,
Drooping its beauty o'er the watery clearness,
To woo its own sad image into nearness:
Deaf to light Zephyrus it would not move;
But still would seem to droop, to pine, to love.
So while the Poet stood in this sweet spot,
Some fainter gleamings o'er his fancy shot;
Nor was it long ere he had told the tale
Of young Narcissus, and sad Echo's bale.

Where had he been, from whose warm head out-flew
That sweetest of all songs, that ever new,
That aye refreshing, pure deliciousness,
Coming ever to bless
The wanderer by moonlight? to him bringing
Shapes from the invisible world, unearthly singing
From out the middle air, from flowery nests,
And from the pillowy silkiness that rests
Full in the speculation of the stars.
Ah! surely he had burst our mortal bars;
Into some wond'rous region he had gone,
To search for thee, divine Endymion!

He was a Poet, sure a lover too,
Who stood on Latmus' top, what time there blew
Soft breezes from the myrtle vale below;
And brought in faintness solemn, sweet, and slow
A hymn from Dian's temple; while upswelling,
The incense went to her own starry dwelling.
But though her face was clear as infant's eyes,
Though she stood smiling o'er the sacrifice,
The Poet wept at her so piteous fate,
Wept that such beauty should be desolate:
So in fine wrath some golden sounds he won,
And gave meek Cynthia her Endymion.

Queen of the wide air; thou most lovely queen
Of all the brightness that mine eyes have seen!
As thou excellest all things in thy shine,
So every tale, does this sweet tale of thine.
O for those words of honey, that I might
Tell but one wonder of thy bridal night!

Where distant ships do seem to show their keels,
Phœbus awhile delayed his mighty wheels,
And turned to smile upon thy bashful eyes,
Ere he his unseen pomp would solemnize.
The evening weather was so bright and clear,
That men of health were of unusual cheer;
Stepping like Homer at the trumpet's call,
Or young Apollo on the pedestal:
And lovely women were as fair and warm,
As Venus looking sideways in alarm.
The breezes were ethereal, and pure,
And crept through half closed lattices to cure
The languid sick; it cool'd their fever'd sleep,
And soothed them into slumbers full and deep.
Soon they awoke clear eyed: nor burnt with thirsting,
Nor with hot fingers, nor with temples bursting:
And springing up, they met the wond'ring sight
Of their dear friends, nigh foolish with delight;
Who feel their arms, and breasts, and kiss and stare,
And on their placid foreheads part the hair.
Young men, and maidens at each other gaz'd
With hands held back, and motionless, amaz'd
To see the brightness in each other's eyes;
And so they stood, fill'd with a sweet surprise,
Until their tongues were loos'd in poesy.
Therefore no lover did of anguish die:
But the soft numbers, in that moment spoken,
Made silken ties, that never may be broken.
Cynthia! I cannot tell the greater blisses,
That followed thine, and thy dear shepherd's kisses:
Was there a Poet born?—but now no more,
My wand'ring spirit must no further soar.—

Specimen of an Induction to a Poem

Lo! I must tell a tale of chivalry;
For large white plumes are dancing in mine eye.
Not like the formal crest of latter days:
But bending in a thousand graceful ways;
So graceful, that it seems no mortal hand,
Or e'en the touch of Archimago's wand,
Could charm them into such an attitude.
We must think rather that in playful mood,
Some mountain breeze had turned its chief delight,
To show this wonder of its gentle might.
Lo! I must tell a tale of chivalry;
For while I muse, the lance points slantingly
Athwart the morning air: some lady sweet,
Who cannot feel for cold her tender feet,
From the worn top of some old battlement
Hails it with tears, her stout defender sent:
And from her own pure self no joy dissembling,
Wraps round her ample robe with happy trembling.
Sometimes, when the good Knight his rest would take,
It is reflected, clearly, in a lake,
With the young ashen boughs, 'gainst which it rests,
And th' half seen mossiness of linnets' nests.
Ah! shall I ever tell its cruelty,
When the fire flashes from a warrior's eye,
And his tremendous hand is grasping it,
And his dark brow for very wrath is knit?
Or when his spirit, with more calm intent,
Leaps to the honors of a tournament,
And makes the gazers round about the ring
Stare at the grandeur of the ballancing?
No, no! this is far off:—then how shall I

Revive the dying tones of minstrelsy,
Which linger yet about lone gothic arches,
In dark green ivy, and among wild larches?
How sing the splendour of the revelries,
When butts of wine are drunk off to the lees?
And that bright lance, against the fretted wall,
Beneath the shade of stately banneral,
Is slung with shining cuirass, sword, and shield?
Where ye may see a spur in bloody field
Light-footed damsels move with gentle paces
Round the wide hall, and show their happy faces;
Or stand in courtly talk by fives and sevens:
Like those fair stars that twinkle in the heavens.
Yet must I tell a tale of chivalry:
Or wherefore comes that steed so proudly by?
Wherefore more proudly does the gentle knight,
Rein in the swelling of his ample might?

Spenser! thy brows are arched, open, kind,
And come like a clear sun-rise to my mind;
And always does my heart with pleasure dance,
When I think on thy noble countenance:
Where never yet was ought more earthly seen
Than the pure freshness of thy laurels green.
Therefore, great bard, I not so fearfully
Call on thy gentle spirit to hover nigh
My daring steps: or if thy tender care,
Thus startled unaware,
Be jealous that the foot of other wight
Should madly follow that bright path of light
Trac'd by thy lov'd Libertas; he will speak,
And tell thee that my prayer is very meek:
That I will follow with due reverence,
And start with awe at mine own strange pretence.
Him thou wilt hear; so I will rest in hope
To see wide plains, fair trees and lawny slope:
The morn, the eve, the light, the shade, the flowers;
Clear streams, smooth lakes, and overlooking towers.

Calidore

A FRAGMENT

YOUNG Calidore is paddling o'er the lake:
His healthful spirit eager and awake
To feel the beauty of a silent eve,
Which seem'd full loath this happy world to leave;
The light dwelt o'er the scene so lingeringly.
He bares his forehead to the cool blue sky,
And smiles at the far clearness all around,
Until his heart is well nigh over wound,
And turns for calmness to the pleasant green
Of easy slopes, and shadowy trees that lean
So elegantly o'er the waters' brim
And show their blossoms trim.
Scarce can his clear nimble eye-sight follow
The freaks, and dartings of the black-wing'd swallow,
Delighting much, to see it half at rest,
Dip so refreshingly its wings, and breast
'Gainst the smooth surface, and to mark anon,
The widening circles into nothing gone.

And now the sharp keel of his little boat
Comes up with ripple, and with easy float,
And glides into a bed of water lillies:
Broad leav'd are they and their white canopies
Are upward turn'd to catch the heavens' dew.
Near to a little island's point they grew;
Whence Calidore might have the goodliest view
Of this sweet spot of earth. The bowery shore
Went off in gentle windings to the hoar
And light blue mountains: but no breathing man
With a warm heart, and eye prepared to scan
Nature's clear beauty, could pass lightly by
Objects that look'd out so invitingly

On either side. These, gentle Calidore
Greeted, as he had known them long before.

The sidelong view of swelling leafiness,
Which the glad setting sun, in gold doth dress;
Whence ever, and anon the jay outsprings,
And scales upon the beauty of its wings.

The lonely turret, shatter'd, and outworn,
Stands venerably proud; too proud to mourn
Its long lost grandeur: fir trees grow around,
Aye dropping their hard fruit upon the ground.

The little chapel with the cross above
Upholding wreaths of ivy; the white dove,
That on the window spreads his feathers light,
And seems from purple clouds to wing its flight.
Green tufted islands casting their soft shades
Across the lake; sequester'd leafy glades,
That through the dimness of their twilight show
Large dock leaves, spiral foxgloves, or the glow
Of the wild cat's eyes, or the silvery stems
Of delicate birch trees, or long grass which hems
A little brook. The youth had long been viewing
These pleasant things, and heaven was bedewing
The mountain flowers, when his glad senses caught
A trumpet's silver voice. Ah! it was fraught
With many joys for him: the warder's ken
Had found white coursers prancing in the glen:
Friends very dear to him he soon will see;
So pushes off his boat most eagerly,
And soon upon the lake he skims along,
Deaf to the nightingale's first under-song;
Nor minds he the white swans that dream so sweetly:
His spirit flies before him so completely.

And now he turns a jutting point of land,
Whence may be seen the castle gloomy, and grand:
Nor will a bee buzz round two swelling peaches,
Before the point of his light shallop reaches
Those marble steps that through the water dip:
Now over them he goes with hasty trip,

And scarcely stays to ope the folding doors:
Anon he leaps along the oaken floors
Of halls and corridors.

Delicious sounds! those little bright-eyed things
That float about the air on azure wings,
Had been less heartfelt by him than the clang
Of clattering hoofs; into the court he sprang,
Just as two noble steeds, and palfreys twain,
Were slanting out their necks with loosened rein;
While from beneath the threat'ning portcullis
They brought their happy burthens. What a kiss,
What gentle squeeze he gave each lady's hand!
How tremblingly their delicate ancles spann'd!
Into how sweet a trance his soul was gone,
While whisperings of affection
Made him delay to let their tender feet
Come to the earth; with an incline so sweet
From their low palfreys o'er his neck they bent:
And whether there were tears of languishment,
Or that the evening dew had pearl'd their tresses,
He feels a moisture on his cheek, and blesses
With lips that tremble, and with glistening eye,
All the soft luxury
That nestled in his arms. A dimpled hand,
Fair as some wonder out of fairy land,
Hung from his shoulder like the drooping flowers
Of whitest Cassia, fresh from summer showers:
And this he fondled with his happy cheek
As if for joy he would no further seek;
When the kind voice of good Sir Clérimond
Came to his ear, like something from beyond
His present being: so he gently drew
His warm arms, thrilling now with pulses new,
From their sweet thrall, and forward gently bending,
Thank'd heaven that his joy was never ending;
While 'gainst his forehead he devoutly press'd
A hand heaven made to succour the distress'd;
A hand that from the world's bleak promontory
Had lifted Calidore for deeds of Glory.

Amid the pages, and the torches' glare,
There stood a knight, patting the flowing hair
Of his proud horse's mane: he was withal
A man of elegance, and stature tall:
So that the waving of his plumes would be
High as the berries of a wild ash tree,
Or as the winged cap of Mercury.
His armour was so dexterously wrought
In shape, that sure no living man had thought
It hard, and heavy steel: but that indeed
It was some glorious form, some splendid weed,
In which a spirit new come from the skies
Might live, and show itself to human eyes.
'Tis the far-fam'd, the brave Sir Gondibert,
Said the good man to Calidore alert;
While the young warrior with a step of grace
Came up,—a courtly smile upon his face,
And mailed hand held out, ready to greet
The large-eyed wonder, and ambitious heat
Of the aspiring boy; who as he led
Those smiling ladies, often turned his head
To admire the visor arched so gracefully
Over a knightly brow; while they went by
The lamps that from the high-roof'd hall were pendent,
And gave the steel a shining quite transcendent.

Soon in a pleasant chamber they are seated;
The sweet-lipp'd ladies have already greeted
All the green leaves that round the window clamber,
To show their purple stars, and bells of amber.
Sir Gondibert has doff'd his shining steel,
Gladdening in the free, and airy feel
Of a light mantle; and while Clerimond
Is looking round about him with a fond
And placid eye, young Calidore is burning
To hear of knightly deeds, and gallant spurning
Of all unworthiness; and how the strong of arm
Kept off dismay, and terror, and alarm
From lovely woman: while brimful of this,
He gave each damsel's hand so warm a kiss,
And had such manly ardour in his eye,
That each at other look'd half staringly;

And then their features started into smiles
Sweet as blue heavens o'er enchanted isles.

Softly the breezes from the forest came,
Softly they blew aside the taper's flame;
Clear was the song from Philomel's far bower;
Grateful the incense from the lime-tree flower;
Mysterious, wild, the far heard trumpet's tone;
Lovely the moon in ether, all alone:
Sweet too the converse of these happy mortals,
As that of busy spirits when the portals
Are closing in the west; or that soft humming
We hear around when Hesperus is coming.
Sweet be their sleep. * * * *

To some Ladies

WHAT though while the wonders of nature exploring,
I cannot your light, mazy footsteps attend;
Nor listen to accents, that almost adoring,
Bless Cynthia's face, the enthusiast's friend:

Yet over the steep, whence the mountain stream rushes,
With you, kindest friends, in idea I rove;
Mark the clear tumbling crystal, its passionate gushes,
Its spray that the wild flower kindly bedews.

Why linger you so, the wild labyrinth strolling?
Why breathless, unable your bliss to declare?
Ah! you list to the nightingale's tender condoling,
Responsive to sylphs, in the moon-beamy air.

'Tis morn, and the flowers with dew are yet drooping,
I see you are treading the verge of the sea:
And now! ah, I see it—you just now are stooping
To pick up the keepsake intended for me.

If a cherub, on pinions of silver descending,
Had brought me a gem from the fret-work of heaven;
And smiles, with his star-cheering voice sweetly blending,
The blessings of Tighe had melodiously given;

It had not created a warmer emotion
Than the present, fair nymphs, I was blest with from you,
Than the shell, from the bright golden sands of the ocean
Which the emerald waves at your feet gladly threw.

For, indeed, 'tis a sweet and peculiar pleasure,
(And blissful is he who such happiness finds,)
To possess but a span of the hour of leisure,
In elegant, pure, and aerial minds.

*On Receiving a Curious Shell, and a Copy of Verses
from the same Ladies*

HAST thou from the caves of Golconda, a gem
Pure as the ice-drop that froze on the mountain?
Bright as the humming-bird's green diadem,
When it flutters in sunbeams that shine through a fountain?

Hast thou a goblet for dark sparkling wine?
That goblet right heavy, and massy, and gold?
And splendidly mark'd with the story divine
Of Armida the fair, and Rinaldo the bold?

Hast thou a steed with a mane richly flowing?
Hast thou a sword that thine enemy's smart is?
Hast thou a trumpet rich melodies blowing?
And wear'st thou the shield of the fam'd Britomartis?

What is it that hangs from thy shoulder, so brave,
Embroidered with many a spring peering flower?
Is it a scarf that thy fair lady gave?
And hastest thou now to that fair lady's bower?

Ah! courteous Sir Knight, with large joy thou art crown'd;
Full many the glories that brighten thy youth!
I will tell thee my blisses, which richly abound
In magical powers to bless, and to sooth.

On this scroll thou seest written in characters fair
A sun-beamy tale of a wreath, and a chain;
And, warrior, it nurtures the property rare
Of charming my mind from the trammels of pain.

This canopy mark: 'tis the work of a fay;
Beneath its rich shade did King Oberon languish,
When lovely Titania was far, far away,
And cruelly left him to sorrow, and anguish.

There, oft would he bring from his soft sighing lute
Wild strains to which, spellbound, the nightingales listened;
The wondering spirits of heaven were mute,
And tears 'mong the dewdrops of morning oft glistened.

In this little dome, all those melodies strange,
Soft, plaintive, and melting, for ever will sigh;
Nor e'er will the notes from their tenderness change,
Nor e'er will the music of Oberon die.

So, when I am in a voluptuous vein,
I pillow my head on the sweets of the rose,
And list to the tale of the wreath, and the chain,
Till its echoes depart; then I sink to repose.

Adieu, valiant Eric! with joy thou art crown'd;
Full many the glories that brighten thy youth,
I too have my blisses, which richly abound
In magical powers, to bless and to sooth.

To ****

HADST thou liv'd in days of old,
O what wonders had been told
Of thy lively countenance,
And thy humid eyes that dance
In the midst of their own brightness;
In the very fane of lightness.
Over which thine eyebrows, leaning,
Picture out each lovely meaning:
In a dainty bend they lie,
Like to streaks across the sky,
Or the feathers from a crow,
Fallen on a bed of snow.
Of thy dark hair that extends
Into many graceful bends:
As the leaves of Hellebore
Turn to whence they sprung before.
And behind each ample curl
Peeps the richness of a pearl.
Downward too flows many a tress
With a glossy waviness;
Full, and round like globes that rise
From the censer to the skies
Through sunny air. Add too, the sweetness
Of thy honied voice; the neatness
Of thine ankle lightly turned:
With those beauties, scarce discern'd,
Kept with such sweet privacy,
That they seldom meet the eye
Of the little loves that fly
Round about with eager pry.
Saving when, with freshening lave,
Thou dipp'st them in the taintless wave;
Like twin water lillies, born
In the coolness of the morn.
O, if thou hadst breathed then,
Now the Muses had been ten.
Couldst thou wish for lineage higher
Than twin sister of Thalia?
At least for ever, evermore.

Will I call the Graces four.
Hadst thou liv'd when chivalry
Lifted up her lance on high,
Tell me what thou wouldst have been?
Ah! I see the silver sheen
Of thy broidered, floating vest
Cov'ring half thine ivory breast;
Which, O heavens! I should see,
But that cruel destiny
Has placed a golden cuirass there;
Keeping secret what is fair.
Like sunbeams in a cloudlet nested
Thy locks in knightly casque are rested:
O'er which bend four milky plumes
Like the gentle lilly's blooms
Springing from a costly vase.
See with what a stately pace
Comes thine alabaster steed;
Servant of heroic deed!
O'er his loins, his trappings glow
Like the northern lights on snow.
Mount his back! thy sword unsheath!
Sign of the enchanter's death;
Bane of every wicked spell;
Silencer of dragon's yell.
Alas! thou this wilt never do:
Thou art an enchantress too,
And wilt surely never spill
Blood of those whose eyes can kill.

To Hope

WHEN by my solitary hearth I sit,
And hateful thoughts enwrap my soul in gloom;
When no fair dreams before my 'mind's eye' flit,
And the bare heath of life presents no bloom;
Sweet Hope, ethereal balm upon me shed,
And wave thy silver pinions o'er my head.

Whene'er I wander, at the fall of night,
Where woven boughs shut out the moon's bright ray,
Should sad Despondency my musings fright,
And frown, to drive fair Cheerfulness away,
Peep with the moon-beams through the leafy roof,
And keep that fiend Despondence far aloof.

Should Disappointment, parent of Despair,
Strive for her son to seize my careless heart;
When, like a cloud, he sits upon the air,
Preparing on his spell-bound prey to dart:
Chace him away, sweet Hope, with visage bright,
And fright him as the morning frightens night!

Whene'er the fate of those I hold most dear
Tells to my fearful breast a tale of sorrow,
O bright-eyed Hope, my morbid fancy cheer;
Let me awhile thy sweetest comforts borrow:
Thy heaven-born radiance around me shed,
And wave thy silver pinions o'er my head!

Should e'er unhappy love my bosom pain,
From cruel parents, or relentless fair;
O let me think it is not quite in vain
To sigh out sonnets to the midnight air!
Sweet Hope, ethereal balm upon me shed,
And wave thy silver pinions o'er my head!

In the long vista of the years to roll,
Let me not see our country's honour fade:
O let me see our land retain her soul,
Her pride, her freedom; and not freedom's shade.
From thy bright eyes unusual brightness shed—
Beneath thy pinions canopy my head!

Let me not see the patriot's high bequest,
Great Liberty! how great in plain attire!
With the base purple of a court oppress'd,
Bowing her head, and ready to expire:
But let me see thee stoop from heaven on wings
That fill the skies with silver glitterings!

And as, in sparkling majesty, a star
Gilds the bright summit of some gloomy cloud;
Brightening the half veil'd face of heaven afar:
So, when dark thoughts my boding spirit shroud,
Sweet Hope, celestial influence round me shed,
Waving thy silver pinions o'er my head.

February, 1815

Imitation of Spenser

Now Morning from her orient chamber came,
And her first footsteps touch'd a verdant hill;
Crowning its lawny crest with amber flame,
Silv'ring the untainted gushes of its rill;
Which, pure from mossy beds, did down distill,
And after parting beds of simple flowers,
By many streams a little lake did fill,
Which round its marge reflected woven bowers,
And, in its middle space, a sky that never lowers.

There the king-fisher saw his plumage bright
Vieing with fish of brilliant dye below;
Whose silken fins, and golden scales' light
Cast upward, through the waves, a ruby glow;
There saw the swan his neck of arched snow,
And oar'd himself along with majesty;
Sparkled his jetty eyes; his feet did show
Beneath the waves like Afric's ebony,
And on his back a fay reclined voluptuously.

Ah! could I tell the wonders of an isle
That in that fairest lake had placed been,
I could e'en Dido of her grief beguile;
Or rob from aged Lear his bitter teen:
For sure so fair a place was never seen,
Of all that ever charm'd romantic eye:
It seemed an emerald in the silver sheen
Of the bright waters; or as when on high,
Through clouds of fleecy white, laughs the caerulean sky.

And all around it dipp'd luxuriously
Slopings of verdure through the glossy tide,
Which, as it were in gentle amity,
Rippled delighted up the flowery side;
As if to glean the ruddy tears, it tried,
Which fell profusely from the rose-tree stem!
Haply it was the workings of its pride,
In strife to throw upon the shore a gem
Outvicing all the buds in Flora's diadem.

WOMAN! when I behold thee flippant, vain,
Inconstant, childish, proud, and full of fancies;
Without that modest softening that enhances
The downcast eye, repentant of the pain
That its mild light creates to heal again:
E'en then, elate, my spirit leaps, and prances,
E'en then my soul with exultation dances
For that to love, so long, I've dormant lain:
But when I see thee meek, and kind, and tender,
Heavens! how desperately do I adore
Thy winning graces;—to be thy defender
I hotly burn—to be a Calidore—
A very Red Cross Knight—a stout Leander—
Might I be loved by thee like these of yore.

Light feet, dark violet eyes, and parted hair;
Soft dimpled hands, white neck, and creamy breast,
Are things on which the dazzled senses rest
Till the fond, fixed eyes, forget they stare.
From such fine pictures, heavens! I cannot dare
To turn my admiration, though unpossess'd
They be of what is worthy,—though not drest
In lovely modesty, and virtue rare.
Yet these I leave as thoughtless as a lark;
These lures I straight forget,—e'en ere I dine,
Or thrice my palate moisten: but when I mark
Such charms with mild intelligences shine,
My ear is open like a greedy shark,
To catch the tunings of a voice divine.

Ah! who can e'er forget so fair a being?
 Who can forget her half retiring sweets?
 God! she is like a milk-white lamb that bleats
 For man's protection. Surely the All-seeing,
 Who joys to see us with his gifts agreeing,
 Will never give him pinions, who intreats
 Such innocence to ruin,—who vilely cheats
 A dove-like bosom. In truth there is no freeing
 One's thoughts from such a beauty; when I hear
 A lay that once I saw her hand awake,
 Her form seems floating palpable, and near;
 Had I e'er seen her from an arbour take
 A dewy flower, oft would that hand appear,
 And o'er my eyes the trembling moisture shake.

Epistle

TO GEORGE FELTON MATHEW

'Among the rest a shepherd (though but young
 Yet hartned to his pipe) with all the skill
 His few yeeres could, began to fit his quill.'

Britannia's Pastorals: BROWNE

SWEET are the pleasures that to verse belong,
 And doubly sweet a brotherhood in song;
 Nor can remembrance, Mathew! bring to view
 A fate more pleasing, a delight more true
 Than that in which the brother Poets joy'd,
 Who with combined powers, their wit employ'd
 To raise a trophy to the drama's muses.
 The thought of this great partnership diffuses
 Over the genius loving heart, a feeling
 Of all that's high, and great, and good, and healing.

Too partial friend! fain would I follow thee
 Past each horizon of fine poesy;
 Fain would I echo back each pleasant note
 As o'er Sicilian seas, clear anthems float

'Mong the light skimming gondolas far parted,
Just when the sun his farewell beam has darted:
But 'tis impossible; far different cares
Beckon me sternly from soft 'Lydian airs,'
And hold my faculties so long in thrall,
That I am oft in doubt whether at all
I shall again see Phœbus in the morning:
Or flush'd Aurora in the roseate dawning!
Or a white Naiad in a rippling stream;
Or a rapt seraph in a moonlight beam;
Or again witness what with thee I've seen,
The dew by fairy feet swept from the green,
After a night of some quaint jubilee
Which every elf and fay had come to see:
When bright processions took their airy march
Beneath the curved moon's triumphal arch.

But might I now each passing moment give
To the coy muse, with me she would not live
In this dark city, nor would condescend
'Mid contradictions her delights to lend.
Should e'er the fine-eyed maid to me be kind,
Ah! surely it must be whene'er I find
Some flowery spot, sequester'd, wild, romantic,
That often must have seen a poet frantic;
Where oaks, that erst the Druid knew, are growing,
And flowers, the glory of one day, are blowing;
Where the dark-leav'd laburnum's drooping clusters
Reflect athwart the stream their yellow lustres,
And intertwined the cassia's arms unite,
With its own drooping buds, but very white.
Where on one side are covert branches hung,
'Mong which the nightingales have always sung
In leafy quiet: where to pry, aloof,
Atween the pillars of the sylvan roof,
Would be to find where violet beds were nestling,
And where the bee with cowslip bells was wrestling.
There must be too a ruin dark, and gloomy,
To say 'joy not too much in all that's bloomy.'

Yet this is vain—O Mathew lend thy aid
To find a place where I may greet the maid—

Where we may soft humanity put on,
And sit, and rhyme and think on Chatterton;
And that warm-hearted Shakespeare sent to meet him
Four laurell'd spirits, heavenward to intreat him.
With reverence would we speak of all the sages
Who have left streaks of light athwart their ages:
And thou shouldst moralize on Milton's blindness,
And mourn the fearful dearth of human kindness
To those who strove with the bright golden wing
Of genius, to flap away each sting
Thrown by the pitiless world. We next could tell
Of those who in the cause of freedom fell;
Of our own Alfred, of Helvetian Tell;
Of him whose name to ev'ry heart's a solace,
High-minded and unbending William Wallace.
While to the rugged north our musing turns
We well might drop a tear for him, and Burns.

Felton! without incitements such as these,
How vain for me the niggard Muse to tease:
For thee, she will thy every dwelling grace,
And make 'a sun-shine in a shady place.'
For thou wast once a flowret blooming wild,
Close to the source, bright, pure, and undefil'd,
Whence gush the streams of song: in happy hour
Came chaste Diana from her shady bower,
Just as the sun was from the east uprising;
And, as for him some gift she was devising,
Beheld thee, pluck'd thee, cast thee in the stream
To meet her glorious brother's greeting beam.
I marvel much that thou hast never told
How, from a flower, into a fish of gold
Apollo chang'd thee; how thou next didst seem
A black-eyed swan upon the widening stream;
And when thou first didst in that mirror trace
The placid features of a human face:
That thou hast never told thy travels strange,
And all the wonders of the mazy range
O'er pebbly crystal, and o'er golden sands;
Kissing thy daily food from Naiad's pearly hands.

November, 1815

Epistle

TO MY BROTHER GEORGE

FULL many a dreary hour have I past,
My brain bewilder'd, and my mind o'ercast
With heaviness; in seasons when I've thought
No sphere's strains by me could e'er be caught
From the blue dome, though I to dimness gaze
On the far depth where sheeted lightning plays;
Or, on the wavy grass outstretch'd supinely,
Pry 'mong the stars, to strive to think divinely:
That I should never hear Apollo's song,
Though feathery clouds were floating all along
The purple west, and, two bright streaks between,
The golden lyre itself were dimly seen:
That the still murmur of the honey bee
Would never teach a rural song to me:
That the bright glance from beauty's eyelids slanting
Would never make a lay of mine enchanting,
Or warm my breast with ardour to unfold
Some tale of love and arms in time of old.

But there are times, when those that love the bay,
Fly from all sorrowing far, far away;
A sudden glow comes on them, nought they see
In water, earth, or air, but poesy.
It has been said, dear George, and true I hold it,
(For knightly Spenser to Libertas told it,)
That when a Poet is in such a trance,
In air he sees white coursers paw, and prance,
Bestriden of gay knights, in gay apparel,
Who at each other tilt in playful quarrel,
And what we, ignorantly, sheet-lightning call,
Is the swift opening of their wide portal,
When the bright warder blows his trumpet clear,
Whose tones reach nought on earth but Poet's ear.
When these enchanted portals open wide,
And through the light the horsemen swiftly glide,
The Poet's eye can reach those golden halls,
And view the glory of their festivals:

Their ladies fair, that in the distance seem
Fit for the silv'ring of a seraph's dream;
Their rich brimm'd goblets, that incessant run
Like the bright spots that move about the sun:
And, when upheld, the wine from each bright jar
Pours with the lustre of a falling star.
Yet further off, are dimly seen their bowers,
Of which, no mortal eye can reach the flowers;
And 'tis right just, for well Apollo knows
'Twould make the Poet quarrel with the rose.
All that's reveal'd from that far seat of blisses,
Is, the clear fountains' interchanging kisses,
As gracefully descending, light and thin,
Like silver streaks across a dolphin's fin,
When he upswimmeth from the coral caves,
And sports with half his tail above the waves.

These wonders strange he sees, and many more,
Whose head is pregnant with poetic lore.
Should he upon an evening ramble fare
With forehead to the soothing breezes bare,
Would he naught see but the dark, silent blue
With all its diamonds trembling through and through?
Or the coy moon, when in the waviness
Of whitest clouds she does her beauty dress,
And staidly paces higher up, and higher,
Like a sweet nun in holy-day attire?
Ah, yes! much more would start into his sight—
The revelries, and mysteries of night:
And should I ever see them, I will tell you
Such tales as needs must with amazement spell you.

These are the living pleasures of the bard:
But richer far posterity's award.
What does he murmur with his latest breath,
While his proud eye looks through the film of death?
'What though I leave this dull, and earthly mould,
Yet shall my spirit lofty converse hold
With after times.—The patriot shall feel
My stern alarum, and unsheath his steel;
Or, in the senate thunder out my numbers
To startle princes from their easy slumbers.

The future from the present, it may seem,
That not one slave, who suffers from the crimes
Of this unnatural being; not one wretch,
Whose children famish, and whose nuptial bed
Is earth's unpitying bosom, rears an arm
To dash him from his throne!

Those gilded flies

That, basking in the sunshine of a court,
Fatten on its corruption!—what are they?
—The drones of the community; they feed
On the mechanic's labour: the starved hind
For them compels the stubborn glebe to yield
Its unshared harvests; and yon squalid form,
Leaner than fleshless misery, that wastes
A sunless life in the unwholesome mine,
Drags out in labour a protracted death,
To glut their grandeur; many faint with toil,
That few may know the cares and woe of sloth.

'Whence, think'st thou, kings and parasites arose?
Whence that unnatural line of drones, who heap
Toil and unvanquishable penury
On those who build their palaces, and bring
Their daily bread?—From vice, black loathsome vice;
From rapine, madness, treachery, and wrong;
From all that 'genders misery, and makes
Of earth this thorny wilderness; from lust,
Revenge, and murder And when Reason's voice,
Loud as the voice of Nature, shall have waked
The nations; and mankind perceive that vice
Is discord, war, and misery; that virtue
Is peace, and happiness and harmony;
When man's maturer nature shall disdain
The playthings of its childhood;—kingly glare
Will lose its power to dazzle; its authority
Will silently pass by; the gorgeous throne
Shall stand unnoticed in the regal hall,
Fast falling to decay; whilst falsehood's trade
Shall be as hateful and unprofitable
As that of truth is now.

Where is the fame
Which the vainglorious mighty of the earth

Seek to eternize? Oh! the faintest sound
 From Time's light footfall, the minutest wave
 That swells the flood of ages, whelms in nothing
 The unsubstantial bubble. Ay! today
 Stern is the tyrant's mandate, red the gaze
 That flashes desolation, strong the arm
 That scatters multitudes. To-morrow comes!
 That mandate is a thunder-peal that died
 In ages past; that gaze, a transient flash
 On which the midnight closed, and on that arm
 The worm has made his meal.

The virtuous man,

Who, great in his humility, as kings
 Are little in their grandeur; he who leads
 Invincibly a life of resolute good,
 And stands amid the silent dungeon-depths
 More free and fearless than the trembling judge,
 Who, clothed in venal power, vainly strove
 To bind the impassive spirit;—when he falls,
 His mild eye beams benevolence no more:
 Withered the hand outstretched but to relieve;
 Sunk Reason's simple eloquence, that rolled
 But to appal the guilty. Yes! the grave
 Hath quenched that eye, and Death's relentless frost
 Withered that arm: but the unfading fame
 Which Virtue hangs upon its votary's tomb;
 The deathless memory of that man, whom kings
 Call to their mind and tremble; the remembrance
 With which the happy spirit contemplates
 Its well-spent pilgrimage on earth,
 Shall never pass away.

'Nature rejects the monarch, not the man;
 The subject, not the citizen: for kings
 And subjects, mutual foes, forever play
 A losing game into each other's hands,
 Whose stakes are vice and misery.

The man

Of virtuous soul commands not, nor obeys.
 Power, like a desolating pestilence,
 Pollutes whate'er it touches; and obedience,
 Bane of all genius, virtue, freedom, truth,

Makes slaves of men, and, of the human frame,
A mechanized automaton.

When Nero,
High over flaming Rome, with savage joy
Lowered like a fiend, drank with enraptured ear
The shrieks of agonizing death, beheld
The frightful desolation spread, and felt
A new-created sense within his soul
Thrill to the sight, and vibrate to the sound;
Think'st thou his grandeur had not overcome
The force of human kindness? and, when Rome,
With one stern blow, hurled not the tyrant down,
Crushed not the arm red with her dearest blood,
Had not submissive abjectness destroyed
Nature's suggestions?

Look on yonder earth:
The golden harvests spring: the unfailing sun
Sheds light and life; the fruits, the flowers, the trees,
Arise in due succession; all things speak
Peace, harmony, and love. The universe,
In Nature's silent eloquence, declares
That all fulfil the works of love and joy—,
All but the outcast, Man. He fabricates
The sword which stabs his peace; he cherisheth
The snakes that gnaw his heart; he raiseth up
The tyrant, whose delight is in his woe,
Whose sport is in his agony. Yon sun,
Lights it the great alone? Yon silver beams,
Sleep they less sweetly on the cottage thatch
Than on the dome of kings? Is mother Earth
A step-dame to her numerous sons, who earn
Her unshared gifts with unremitting toil;
A mother only to those puling babes
Who, nursed in ease and luxury, make men
The playthings of their babyhood, and mar,
In self-important childishness, that peace
Which men alone appreciate?

'Spirit of Nature! no.
The pure diffusion of thy essence throbs
Alike in every human heart.
Thou, aye, cretest there

Thy throne of power unappealable:
 Thou art the judge beneath whose nod
 Man's brief and frail authority
 Is powerless as the wind
 That passeth idly by.
 Thine the tribunal which surpasseth
 The show of human justice,
 As God surpasses man.

'Spirit of Nature! thou
 Life of interminable multitudes;
 Soul of those mighty spheres
 Whose changeless paths through Heaven's deep silence lie;
 Soul of that smallest being,
 The dwelling of whose life
 Is one faint April sun-gleam;—
 Man, like these passive things,
 Thy will unconsciously fulfilleth:
 Like theirs, his age of endless peace,
 Which time is fast maturing,
 Will swiftly, surely come;
 And the unbounded frame, which thou pervadest,
 Will be without a flaw
 Marring its perfect symmetry.

IV

'How beautiful this night! the balmy sigh,
 Which vernal zephyrs breathe in evening's ear,
 Were discord to the speaking quietude
 That wraps this moveless scene.
 Heaven's ebon vault,
 Studded with stars unutterably bright,
 Through which the moon's unclouded grandeur rolls,
 Seems like a canopy which love had spread
 To curtain her sleeping world. Yon gentle hills,
 Robed in a garment of untrodden snow;
 Yon darksome rocks, whence icicles depend,
 So stainless, that their white and glittering spires
 Tinge not the moon's pure beam; yon castled steep,
 Whose banner hangeth o'er the timeworn tower

So idly, that rapt fancy deemeth it
A metaphor of peace;—all form a scene
Where musing Solitude might love to lift
Her soul above this sphere of earthliness;
Where Silence undisturbed might watch alone,
So cold, so bright, so still.

The orb of day,

In southern climes, o'er ocean's waveless field
Sinks sweetly smiling: not the faintest breath
Steals o'er the unruffled deep; the clouds of eve
Reflect unmoved the lingering beam of day;
And vesper's image on the western main
Is beautifully still. To-morrow comes:
Cloud upon cloud, in dark and deepening mass,
Roll o'er the blackened waters; the deep roar
Of distant thunder mutters awfully;
Tempest unfolds its pinion o'er the gloom
That shrouds the boiling surge; the pitiless fiend,
With all his winds and lightnings, tracks his prey;
The torn deep yawns,—the vessel finds a grave
Beneath its jagged gulf.

Ah! whence yon glare

That fires the arch of Heaven?—that dark red smoke
Blotting the silver moon? The stars are quenched
In darkness, and the pure and spangling snow
Gleams faintly through the gloom that gathers round!
Hark to that roar, whose swift and deaf'ning peals
In countless echoes through the mountains ring,
Startling pale Midnight on her starry throne!
Now swells the intermingling din; the jar
Frequent and frightful of the bursting bomb;
The falling beam, the shriek, the groan, the shout,
The ceaseless clangour, and the rush of men
Inebriate with rage:—loud, and more loud
The discord grows; till pale Death shuts the scene,
And o'er the conqueror and the conquered draws
His cold and bloody shroud.—Of all the men
Whom day's departing beam saw blooming there,
In proud and vigorous health; of all the hearts
That beat with anxious life at sunset there;
How few survive, how few are beating now!
All is deep silence, like the fearful calm

That slumbers in the storm's portentous pause;
 Save when the frantic wail of widowed love
 Comes shuddering on the blast, or the faint moan
 With which some soul bursts from the frame of clay
 Wrapped round its struggling powers.

The gray morn

Dawns on the mournful scene; the sulphurous smoke
 Before the icy wind slow rolls away,
 And the bright beams of frosty morning dance
 Along the spangling snow. There tracks of blood
 Even to the forest's depth, and scattered arms,
 And lifeless warriors, whose hard lineaments
 Death's self could change not, mark the dreadful path
 Of the outsallying victors: far behind,
 Black ashes note where their proud city stood.
 Within yon forest is a gloomy glen—
 Each tree which guards its darkness from the day,
 Waves o'er a warrior's tomb.

I see thee shrink,

Surpassing Spirit!—wert thou human else?
 I see a shade of doubt and horror fleet
 Across thy stainless features: yet fear not;
 This is no unconnected misery,
 Nor stands uncaused, and irretrievable.
 Man's evil nature, that apology
 Which kings who rule, and cowards who crouch, set up
 For their unnumbered crimes, sheds not the blood
 Which desolates the discord-wasted land.
 From kings, and priests, and statesmen, war arose,
 Whose safety is man's deep unbettered woe,
 Whose grandeur his debasement. Let the axe
 Strike at the root, the poison-tree will fall;
 And where its venom'd exhalations spread
 Ruin, and death, and woe, where millions lay
 Quenching the serpent's famine, and their bones
 Bleaching unburied in the putrid blast,
 A garden shall arise, in loveliness
 Surpassing fabled Eden.

Hath Nature's soul,

That formed this world so beautiful, that spread
 Earth's lap with plenty, and life's smallest chord
 Strung to unchanging unison, that gave

The happy birds their dwelling in the grove,
That yielded to the wanderers of the deep
The lovely silence of the unfathomed main,
And filled the meanest worm that crawls in dust
With spirit, thought, and love; on Man alone,
Partial in causeless malice, wantonly
Heaped ruin, vice, and slavery; his soul
Blasted with withering curses; placed afar
The meteor-happiness, that shuns his grasp,
But serving on the frightful gulf to glare,
Rent wide beneath his footsteps?

Nature!—no!

Kings, priests, and statesmen, blast the human flower
Even in its tender bud; their influence darts
Like subtle poison through the bloodless veins
Of desolate society. The child,
Ere he can lisp his mother's sacred name,
Swells with the unnatural pride of crime, and lifts
His baby-sword even in a hero's mood.
This infant-arm becomes the bloodiest scourge
Of devastated earth; whilst specious names,
Learned in soft childhood's unsuspecting hour,
Serve as the sophisms with which manhood dims
Bright Reason's ray, and sanctifies the sword
Upraised to shed a brother's innocent blood.
Let priest-led slaves cease to proclaim that man
Inherits vice and misery, when Force
And Falschood hang even o'er the cradled babe,
Stifling with rudest grasp all natural good.
'Ah! to the stranger-soul, when first it peeps
From its new tenement, and looks abroad
For happiness and sympathy, how stern
And desolate a tract is this wide world!
How withered all the buds of natural good!
No shade, no shelter from the sweeping storms
Of pitiless power! On its wretched frame,
Poisoned, perchance, by the disease and woe
Heaped on the wretched parent whence it sprung
By morals, law, and custom, the pure winds
Of Heaven, that renovate the insect tribes,
May breathe not. The untainting light of day
May visit not its longings. It is bound

Ere it has life: yea, all the chains are forged
Long ere its being: all liberty and love
And peace is torn from its defencelessness;
Cursed from its birth, even from its cradle doomed
To abjectness and bondage!

‘Throughout this varied and eternal world
Soul is the only element: the block
That for uncounted ages has remained
The moveless pillar of a mountain’s weight
Is active, living spirit. Every grain
Is sentient both in unity and part,
And the minutest atom comprehends
A world of loves and hatreds; these beget
Evil and good: hence truth and falsehood spring;
Hence will and thought and action, all the germs
Of pain or pleasure, sympathy or hate,
That variegate the eternal universe.
Soul is not more polluted than the beams
Of Heaven’s pure orb, ere round their rapid lines
The taint of earth-born atmospheres arise.

‘Man is of soul and body, formed for deeds
Of high resolve, on fancy’s boldest wing
To soar unwearied, fearlessly to turn
The keenest pangs to peacefulness, and taste
The joys which mingled sense and spirit yield.
Or he is formed for abjectness and woe,
To grovel on the dunghill of his fears,
To shrink at every sound, to quench the flame
Of natural love in sensualism, to know
That hour as blessed when on his worthless days
The frozen hand of Death shall set its seal,
Yet fear the cure, though hating the disease.
The one is man that shall hereafter be;
The other, man as vice has made him now.

‘War is the statesman’s game, the priest’s delight,
The lawyer’s jest, the hired assassin’s trade,
And, to those royal murderers, whose mean thrones
Are bought by crimes of treachery and gore,
The bread they eat, the staff on which they lean.

Guards, garbed in blood-red livery, surround
 Their palaces, participate the crimes
 That force defends, and from a nation's rage
 Secure the crown, which all the curses reach
 That famine, frenzy, woe and penury breathe.
 These are the hired bravos who defend
 The tyrant's throne—the bullies of his fear:
 These are the sinks and channels of worst vice,
 The refuse of society, the dregs
 Of all that is most vile: their cold hearts blend
 Deceit with sternness, ignorance with pride,
 All that is mean and villainous, with rage
 Which hopelessness of good, and self-contempt,
 Alone might kindle; they are decked in wealth,
 Honour and power, then are sent abroad
 To do their work. The pestilence that stalks
 In gloomy triumph through some eastern land
 Is less destroying. They cajole with gold,
 And promises of fame, the thoughtless youth
 Already crushed with servitude: he knows
 His wretchedness too late, and cherishes
 Repentance for his ruin, when his doom
 Is sealed in gold and blood!
 Those too the tyrant serve, who, skilled to snare
 The feet of Justice in the toils of law,
 Stand, ready to oppress the weaker still;
 And right or wrong will vindicate for gold,
 Sneering at public virtue, which beneath
 Their pitiless tread lies torn and trampled, where
 Honour sits smiling at the sale of truth.

"Then grave and hoary-headed hypocrites,
 Without a hope, a passion, or a love,
 Who, through a life of luxury and lies,
 Have crept by flattery to the seats of power,
 Support the system whence their honours flow....
 They have three words:—well tyrants know their use,
 Well pay them for the loan, with usury
 Torn from a bleeding world!—God, Hell, and Heaven.
 A vengeful, pitiless, and almighty fiend,
 Whose mercy is a nickname for the rage
 Of tameless tigers hungering for blood.

Hell, a red gulf of everlasting fire,
Where poisonous and undying worms prolong
Eternal misery to those hapless slaves
Whose life has been a penance for its crimes.
And Heaven, a meed for those who dare belie
Their human nature, quake, believe, and cringe
Before the mockeries of earthly power.

'These tools the tyrant tempers to his work,
Wields in his wrath, and as he wills destroys,
Omnipotent in wickedness: the while
Youth springs, age moulders, manhood tamely does
His bidding, bribed by short-lived joys to lend
Force to the weakness of his trembling arm.

'They rise, they fall; one generation comes
Yielding its harvest to destruction's scythe.
It fades, another blossoms: yet behold!
Red glows the tyrant's stamp-mark on its bloom,
Withering and cankering deep its passive prime.
He has invented lying words and modes,
Empty and vain as his own coreless heart;
Evasive meanings, nothings of much sound,
To lure the heedless victim to the toils
Spread round the valley of its paradise.

'Look to thyself, priest, conqueror, or prince!
Whether thy trade is falsehood, and thy lusts
Deep wallow in the earnings of the poor,
With whom thy Master was:—or thou delight'st
In numbering o'er the myriads of thy slain,
All misery weighing nothing in the scale
Against thy short-lived fame: or thou dost load
With cowardice and crime the groaning land,
A pomp-fed king. Look to thy wretched self!
Ay, art thou not the veriest slave that e'er
Crawled on the loathing earth? Are not thy days
Days of unsatisfying listlessness?
Dost thou not cry, ere night's long rack is o'er,
"When will the morning come?" Is not thy youth
A vain and feverish dream of sensualism?
Thy manhood blighted with unripe disease?

Are not thy views of unregretted death
 Drear, comfortless, and horrible? Thy mind,
 Is it not morbid as thy nerveless frame,
 Incapable of judgement, hope, or love?
 And dost thou wish the errors to survive
 That bar thee from all sympathies of good,
 After the miserable interest
 Thou hold'st in their protraction?

When the grave

Has swallowed up thy memory and thyself,
 Dost thou desire the bane that poisons earth
 To twine its roots around thy confined clay,
 Spring from thy bones, and blossom on thy tomb,
 That of its fruit thy babes may eat and die?

V

'THUS do the generations of the earth
 Go to the grave, and issue from the womb,
 Surviving still the imperishable change
 That renovates the world; even as the leaves
 Which the keen frost-wind of the waning year
 Has scattered on the forest soil, and heaped
 For many seasons there—though long they choke,
 Loading with loathsome rottenness the land,
 All germs of promise, yet when the tall trees
 From which they fell, shorn of their lovely shapes,
 Lie level with the earth to moulder there,
 They fertilize the land they long deformed,
 Till from the breathing lawn a forest springs
 Of youth, integrity, and loveliness,
 Like that which gave it life, to spring and die.
 Thus suicidal selfishness, that blights
 The fairest feelings of the opening heart,
 Is destined to decay, whilst from the soil
 Shall spring all virtue, all delight, all love,
 And judgement cease to wage unnatural war
 With passion's unsubduable array.
 Twin-sister of religion, selfishness!
 Rival in crime and falsehood, aping all
 The wanton horrors of her bloody play;
 Yet frozen, unimpassioned, spiritless,
 Shunning the light, and owning not its name.

Compelled, by its deformity, to screen
With flimsy veil of justice and of right
Its unattractive lineaments, that scare
All, save the brood of ignorance: at once
The cause and the effect of tyranny;
Unblushing, hardened, sensual, and vile;
Dead to all love but of its abjectness,
With heart impassive by more noble powers
Than unshared pleasure, sordid gain, or fame;
Despising its own miserable being,
Which still it longs, yet fears to disenthral.

'Hence commerce springs, the venal interchange
Of all that human art or nature yield;
Which wealth should purchase not, but want demand,
And natural kindness hasten to supply
From the full fountain of its boundless love,
For ever stifled, drained, and tainted now.
Commerce! beneath whose poison-breathing shade
No solitary virtue dares to spring,
But Poverty and Wealth with equal hand
Scatter their withering curses, and unfold
The doors of premature and violent death,
To pining famine and full-fed disease,
To all that shares the lot of human life,
Which poisoned, body and soul, scarce drags the chain,
That lengthens as it goes and clanks behind.

'Commerce has set the mark of selfishness,
The signet of its all-enslaving power,
Upon a shining ore, and called it gold:
Before whose image bow the vulgar great,
The vainly rich, the miserable proud,
The mob of peasants, nobles, priests, and kings,
And with blind feelings reverence the power
That grinds them to the dust of misery.
But in the temple of their hireling hearts
Gold is a living god, and rules in scorn
All earthly things but virtue.

'Since tyrants, by the sale of human life,
Heap luxuries to their sensualism, and fame

To their wide-wasting and insatiate pride,
 Success has sanctioned to a credulous world
 The ruin, the disgrace, the woe of war.
 His hosts of blind and unresisting dupes
 The despot numbers; from his cabinet
 These puppets of his schemes he moves at will,
 Even as the slaves by force or famine driven,
 Beneath a vulgar master, to perform
 A task of cold and brutal drudgery;—
 Hardened to hope, insensible to fear,
 Scarce living pulleys of a dead machine,
 Mere wheels of work and articles of trade,
 That grace the proud and noisy pomp of wealth!

“The harmony and happiness of man
 Yields to the wealth of nations; that which lifts
 His nature to the heaven of its pride,
 Is bartered for the poison of his soul;
 The weight that drags to earth his towering hopes,
 Blighting all prospect but of selfish gain,
 Withering all passion but of slavish fear,
 Extinguishing all free and generous love
 Of enterprise and daring, even the pulse
 That fancy kindles in the beating heart
 To mingle with sensation, it destroys,—
 Leaves nothing but the sordid lust of self,
 The grovelling hope of interest and gold,
 Unqualified, unmingled, unredeemed
 Even by hypocrisy.

And statesmen boast
 Of wealth! The wordy eloquence, that lives
 After the ruin of their hearts, can gild
 The bitter poison of a nation's woe,
 Can turn the worship of the servile mob
 To their corrupt and glaring idol, Fame,
 From Virtue, trampled by its iron tread,
 Although its dazzling pedestal be raised
 Amid the horrors of a limb-strewn field,
 With desolated dwellings smoking round.
 The man of ease, who, by his warm fireside,
 To deeds of charitable intercourse,
 And bare fulfilment of the common laws

Of decency and prejudice, confines
The struggling nature of his human heart,
Is duped by their cold sophistry; he sheds
A passing tear perchance upon the wreck
Of earthly peace, when near his dwelling's door
The frightful waves are driven,—when his son
Is murdered by the tyrant, or religion
Drives his wife raving mad. But the poor man,
Whose life is misery, and fear, and care;
Whom the morn wakens but to fruitless toil;
Who ever hears his famished offspring's scream,
Whom their pale mother's uncomplaining gaze
For ever meets, and the proud rich man's eye
Flashing command, and the heartbreaking scene
Of thousands like himself;—he little heeds
The rhetoric of tyranny; his hate
Is quenchless as his wrongs; he laughs to scorn
The vain and bitter mockery of words,
Feeling the horror of the tyrant's deeds,
And unrestrained but by the arm of power,
That knows and dreads his enmity.

“The iron rod of Penury still compels
Her wretched slave to bow the knee to wealth,
And poison, with unprofitable toil,
A life too void of solace to confirm
The very chains that bind him to his doom.
Nature, impartial in munificence,
Has gifted man with all-subduing will.
Matter, with all its transitory shapes,
Lies subjected and plastic at his feet,
That, weak from bondage, tremble as they tread.
How many a rustic Milton has passed by,
Stifling the speechless longings of his heart,
In unremitting drudgery and care!
How many a vulgar Cato has compelled
His energies, no longer tameless then,
To mould a pin, or fabricate a nail!
How many a Newton, to whose passive ken
Those mighty spheres that gem infinity
Were only specks of tinsel, fixed in Heaven
To light the midnights of his native town!

'Yet every heart contains perfection's germ:
 The wisest of the sages of the earth,
 That ever from the stores of reason drew
 Science and truth, and virtue's dreadless tone,
 Were but a weak and inexperienced boy,
 Proud, sensual, unimpassioned, unimbued
 With pure desire and universal love,
 Compared to that high being, of cloudless brain,
 Untainted passion, elevated will,
 Which Death (who even would linger long in awe
 Within his noble presence, and beneath
 His changeless eyebeam) might alone subdue.
 Him, every slave now dragging through the filth
 Of some corrupted city his sad life,
 Pining with famine, swoln with luxury,
 Blunting the keenness of his spiritual sense
 With narrow schemings and unworthy cares,
 Or madly rushing through all violent crime,
 To move the deep stagnation of his soul—
 Might imitate and equal.

But mean lust
 Has bound its chains so tight around the earth,
 That all within it but the virtuous man
 Is venal: gold or fame will surely reach
 The price prefixed by selfishness, to all
 But him of resolute and unchanging will;
 Whom, nor the plaudits of a servile crowd,
 Nor the vile joys of tainting luxury,
 Can bribe to yield his elevated soul
 To Tyranny or Falsehood, though they wield
 With blood-red hand the sceptre of the world.

'All things are sold: the very light of Heaven
 Is venal; earth's unsparing gifts of love,
 The smallest and most despicable things
 That lurk in the abysses of the deep,
 All objects of our life, even life itself,
 And the poor pittance which the laws allow
 Of liberty, the fellowship of man,
 Those duties which his heart of human love
 Should urge him to perform instinctively,
 Are bought and sold as in a public mart

Of undisguising selfishness, that sets
On each its price, the stamp-mark of her reign.
Even love is sold; the solace of all woe
Is turned to deadliest agony, old age
Shivers in selfish beauty's loathing arms,
And youth's corrupted impulses prepare
A life of horror from the blighting bane
Of commerce; whilst the pestilence that springs
From unenjoying sensualism, has filled
All human life with hydra-headed woes.

'Falsehood demands but gold to pay the pangs
Of outraged conscience, for the slavish priest
Sets no great value on his hireling faith:
A little passing pomp, some servile souls,
Whom cowardice itself might safely chain,
Or the spare mite of avarice could bribe
To deck the triumph of their languid zeal,
Can make him minister to tyranny.
More daring crime requires a loftier meed:
Without a shudder, the slave-soldier lends
His arm to murderous deeds, and steels his heart,
When the dread eloquence of dying men,
Low mingling on the lonely field of fame,
Assails that nature, whose applause he sells
For the gross blessings of a patriot mob,
For the vile gratitude of heartless kings.
And for a cold world's good word,—viler still!

'There is a nobler glory, which survives
Until our being fades, and, solacing
All human care, accompanies its change;
Deserts not virtue in the dungeon's gloom,
And, in the precincts of the palace, guides
Its footsteps through that labyrinth of crime;
Imbues his lineaments with dauntlessness,
Even when, from Power's avenging hand, he takes
Its sweetest, last and noblest title—death;
—The consciousness of good, which neither gold,
Nor sordid fame, nor hope of heavenly bliss
Can purchase; but a life of resolute good,
Unalterable will, quenchless desire

But what is higher beyond thought than thee?
Fresher than berries of a mountain tree?
More strange, more beautiful, more smooth, more regal,
Than wings of swans, than doves, than dim-seen eagle?
What is it? And to what shall I compare it?
It has a glory, and nought else can share it:
The thought thereof is awful, sweet, and holy,
Chacing away all worldliness and folly;
Coming sometimes like fearful claps of thunder,
Or the low rumblings earth's regions under;
And sometimes like a gentle whispering
Of all the secrets of some wond'rous thing
That breathes about us in the vacant air;
So that we look around with prying stare,
Perhaps to see shapes of light, aerial lymning,
And catch soft floatings from a faint-heard hymning;
To see the laurel wreath, on high suspended,
That is to crown our name when life is ended.
Sometimes it gives a glory to the voice,
And from the heart up-springs, rejoice! rejoice!
Sounds which will reach the Farmer of all things,
And die away in ardent mutterings.

No one who once the glorious sun has seen,
And all the clouds, and felt his bosom clean
For his great Maker's presence, but must know
What 'tis I mean, and feel his being glow:
Therefore no insult will I give his spirit,
By telling what he sees from native merit.

O Poesy! for thee I hold my pen
That am not yet a glorious denizen
Of thy wide heaven—Should I rather kneel
Upon some mountain-top until I feel
A glowing splendour round about me hung,
And echo back the voice of thine own tongue?
O Poesy! for thee I grasp my pen
That am not yet a glorious denizen
Of thy wide heaven; yet, to my ardent prayer,
Yield from thy sanctuary some clear air,
Smoothed for intoxication by the breath
Of flowering bays, that I may die a death

Of luxury, and my young spirit follow
The morning sun-beams to the great Apollo
Like a fresh sacrifice; or, if I can bear
The o'erwhelming sweets, 'twill bring to me the fair
Visions of all places: a bowery nook
Will be elysium—an eternal book
Whence I may copy many a lovely saying
About the leaves, and flowers—about the playing
Of nymphs in woods, and fountains; and the shade
Keeping a silence round a sleeping maid;
And many a verse from so strange influence
That we must ever wonder how, and whence
It came. Also imaginings will hover
Round my fire-side, and haply there discover
Vistas of solemn beauty, where I'd wander
In happy silence, like the clear Meander
Through its lone vales; and where I found a spot
Of awfuller shade, or an enchanted grot,
Or a green hill o'erspread with chequered dress
Of flowers, and fearful from its loveliness,
Write on my tablets all that was permitted,
All that was for our human senses fitted.
Then the events of this wide world I'd seize
Like a strong giant, and my spirit tease
Till at its shoulders it should proudly see
Wings to find out an immortality.

Stop and consider! life is but a day;
A fragile dewdrop on its perilous way
From a tree's summit; a poor Indian's sleep
While his boat hastens to the monstrous steep
Of Montmorenci. Why so sad a moan?
Life is the roses's hope while yet unblown;
The reading of an ever-changing tale;
The light uplifting of a maiden's veil;
A pigeon tumbling in clear summer air;
A laughing school-boy, without grief or care,
Riding the springy branches of an elm.

O for ten years, that I may overwhelm
Myself in poesy; so I may do the deed
That my own soul has to itself decreed.

Then will I pass the countries that I see
In long perspective, and continually
Taste their pure fountains. First the realm I'll pass
Of Flora, and old Pan: sleep in the grass,
Feed upon apples red, and strawberries,
And choose each pleasure that my fancy sees;
Catch the white-handed nymphs in shady places,
To woo sweet kisses from averted faces,—
Play with their fingers, touch their shoulders white
Into a pretty shrinking with a bite
As hard as lips can make it; till agreed,
A lovely tale of human life we'll read.
And one will teach a tame dove how it best
May fan the cool air gently o'er my rest;
Another, bending o'er her nimble tread,
Will set a green robe floating round her head,
And still will dance with ever varied ease,
Smiling upon the flowers and the trees:
Another will entice me on, and on
Through almond blossoms and rich cinnamon;
Till in the bosom of a leafy world
We rest in silence, like two gems upcurl'd
In the recesses of a pearly shell.

And can I ever bid these joys farewell?
Yes, I must pass them for a nobler life,
Where I may find the agonies, the strife
Of human hearts: for lo! I see afar,
O'ersailing the blue cragginess, a car
And steeds with streamy manes—the charioteer
Looks out upon the winds with glorious fear;
And now the numerous tramlings quiver lightly
Along a huge cloud's ridge; and now with sprightly
Wheel downward come they into fresher skies,
Tipt round with silver from the sun's bright eyes.
Still downward with capacious whirl they glide;
And now I see them on a green-hill's side
In breezy rest among the nodding stalks.
The charioteer with wond'rous gesture talks
To the trees and mountains; and there soon appear
Shapes of delight, of mystery, and fear,
Passing along before a dusky space

Made by some mighty oaks: as they would chase
Some ever-fleeting music on they sweep.
Lo! how they murmur, laugh, and smile, and weep:
Some with upholden hand and mouth severe;
Some with their faces muffled to the ear
Between their arms; some, clear in youthful bloom,
Go glad and smilingly athwart the gloom;
Some looking back, and some with upward gaze;
Yes, thousands in a thousand different ways
Flit onward—now a lovely wreath of girls
Dancing their sleek hair into tangled curls;
And now broad wings. Most awfully intent
The driver of those steeds is forward bent,
And seems to listen: O that I might know
All that he writes with such a hurrying glow!

The visions all are fled—the car is fled
Into the light of heaven, and in their stead
A sense of real things comes doubly strong,
And, like a muddy stream, would bear along
My soul to nothingness: but I will strive
Against all doubtings, and will keep alive
The thought of that same chariot, and the strange
Journey it went.

Is there so small a range
In the present strength of manhood, that the high
Imagination cannot freely fly
As she was wont of old? prepare her steeds,
Paw up against the light, and do strange deeds
Upon the clouds? Has she not shewn us all?
From the clear space of ether, to the small
Breath of new buds unfolding? From the meaning
Of Jove's large eyebrow, to the tender greening
Of April meadows? Here her altar shone,
E'en in this isle; and who could paragon
The fervid choir that lifted up a noise
Of harmony, to where it aye will poise
Its mighty self of convoluting sound,
Huge as a planet, and like that roll round,
Eternally around a dizzy void?
Ay, in those days the Muses were nigh cloy'd

With honors; nor had any other care
Than to sing out and sooth their wavy hair.

Could all this be forgotten? Yes, a scism
Nurtured by foppery and barbarism.
Made great Apollo blush for this his land.
Men were thought wise who could not understand
His glories: with a puling infant's force
They sway'd about upon a rocking horse,
And thought it Pegasus. Ah dismal soul'd!
The winds of heaven blew, the ocean roll'd
Its gathering waves—ye felt it not. The blue
Bared its eternal bosom. and the dew
Of summer nights collected still to make
The morning precious: beauty was awake!
Why were ye not awake? But ye were dead
To things ye knew not of,—were closely wed
To musty laws lined out with wretched rule
And compass vile: so that ye taught a school
Of dolts to smooth, inlay, and clip, and fit,
Till, like the certain wands of Jacob's wit,
Their verses tallied. Easy was the task:
A thousand handicraftsmen wore the mask
Of Poesy. Ill-fated, impious race!
That blasphemed the bright Lyrist to his face,
And did not know it,—no, they went about,
Holding a poor, decrepid standard out
Marked with most flimsy mottos, and in large
The name of one Boileau!

O ye whose charge
It is to hover round our pleasant hills!
Whose congregated majesty so fills
My boundly reverence, that I cannot trace
Your hallowed names, in this unholy place,
So near those common folk; did not their shames
Affright you? Did our old lamenting Thames
Delight you? Did ye never cluster round
Delicious Avon, with a mournful sound,
And weep? Or did ye wholly bid adieu
To regions where no more the laurel grew?
Or did ye stay to give a welcoming

To some lone spirits who could proudly sing
Their youth away, and die? 'Twas even so:
But let me think away those times of woe:
Now 'tis a fairer season; ye have breathed
Rich benedictions o'er us; ye have wreathed
Fresh garlands: for sweet music has been heard
In many places;—some has been upstirr'd
From out its crystal dwelling in a lake,
By a swan's ebon bill; from a thick brake,
Nested and quiet in a valley mild,
Bubbles a pipe; fine sounds are floating wild
About the earth: happy are ye and glad.

These things are doubtless: yet in truth we've had
Strange thunders from the potency of song;
Mingled indeed with what is sweet and strong,
From majesty: but in clear truth the themes
Are ugly clubs, the Poets Polyphemes
Disturbing the grand sea. A drainless shower
Of light is poesy; 'tis the supreme of power;
'Tis might half slumb'ring on its own right arm.
The very archings of her eye-lids charm
A thousand willing agents to obey,
And still she governs with the mildest sway:
But strength alone though of the Muses born
Is like a fallen angel: trees uptorn,
Darkness, and worms, and shrouds, and sepulchres
Delight it; for it feeds upon the burrs,
And thorns of life; forgetting the great end
Of poesy, that it should be a friend
To sooth the cares, and lift the thoughts of man.

Yet I rejoice: a myrtle fairer than
E'er grew in Paphos, from the bitter weeds
Lifts its sweet head into the air, and feeds
A silent space with ever sprouting green.
All tenderest birds there find a pleasant screen,
Creep through the shade with jaunty fluttering,
Nibble the little cupped flowers and sing.
Then let us clear away the choaking thorns
From round its gentle stem; let the young fawns,
Yeanned in after times, when we are flown,

Find a fresh sword beneath it, overgrown
With simple flowers; let there nothing be
More boisterous than a lover's bended knee;
Nought more ungentle than the placid look
Of one who leans upon a closed book;
Nought more untroubled than the grassy slopes
Between two hills All hail delightful hopes!
As she was wont, th' imagination
Into most lovely labyrinths will be gone,
And they shall be accounted poet kings
Who simply tell the most heart-easing things.
O may these joys be ripe before I die.

Will not some say that I presumptuously
Have spoken? that from hastening disgrace
'Twere better far to hide my foolish face?
That whining boyhood should with reverence bow
Ere the dread thunderbolt could reach? How!
If I do hide myself, it sure shall be
In the very fane, the light of Poesy:
If I do fall, at least I will be laid
Beneath the silence of a poplar shade;
And over me the grass shall be smooth shaven;
And there shall be a kind memorial graven.
But off Despondence! miserable bane!
They should not know thee, who athirst to gain
A noble end, are thirsty every hour
What though I am not wealthy in the dower
Of spanning wisdom; though I do not know
The shiftings of the mighty winds that blow
Hither and thither all the changing thoughts
Of man: though no great minist'ring reason sorts
Out the dark mysteries of human souls
To clear conceiving: yet there ever rolls
A vast idea before me, and I glean
Therefrom my liberty; thence too I've seen
The end and aim of Poesy. 'Tis clear
As anything most true; as that the year
Is made of the four seasons—manifest
As a large cross, some old cathedral's crest,
Lifted to the white clouds. Therefore should I
Be but the essence of deformity,

A coward, did my very eye-lids wink
At speaking out what I have dared to think.
Ah! rather let me like a madman run
Over some precipice; let the hot sun
Melt my Dedalian wings, and drive me down
Convuls'd and headlong! Stay! an inward frown
Of conscience bids me be more calm awhile.
An ocean dim, sprinkled with many an aisle,
Spreads awfully before me. How much toil!
How many days! what desperate turmoil!
Ere I can have explored its widenesses.
Ah, what a task! upon my bended knees,
I could unsay those—no, impossible!
Impossible!

For sweet relief I'll dwell
On humbler thoughts, and let this strange assay
Begun in gentleness die so away.
E'en now all tumult from my bosom fades:
I turn full hearted to the friendly aids
That smooth the path of honour; brotherhood,
And friendliness the nurse of mutual good.
The hearty grasp that sends a pleasant sonnet
Into the brain ere one can think upon it;
The silence when some rhymes are coming out;
And when they're come, the very pleasant rout:
The message certain to be done to-morrow.
'Tis perhaps as well that it should be to borrow
Some precious book from out its snug retreat,
To cluster round it when we next shall meet.
Scarce can I scribble on; for lovely airs
Are fluttering round the room like doves in pairs;
Many delights of that glad day recalling,
When first my senses caught their tender falling.
And with these airs come forms of elegance
Stooping their shoulders o'er a horse's prance,
Careless, and grand—fingers soft and round
Parting luxuriant curls;—and the swift bound
Of Bacchus from his chariot, when his eye
Made Ariadne's cheek look blushing.
Thus I remember all the pleasant flow
Of words at opening a portfolio.

Things such as these are ever harbingers
To trains of peaceful images: the stirs
Of a swan's neck unseen among the rushes:
A linnet starting all about the bushes:
A butterfly, with golden wings broad parted,
Nestling a rose, convuls'd as though it smarted
With over pleasure—many, many more,
Might I indulge at large in all my store
Of luxuries: yet I must not forget
Sleep, quiet with his poppy coronet:
For what there may be worthy in these rhymes
I partly owe to him: and thus, the chimes
Of friendly voices had just given place
To as sweet a silence, when I 'gan retrace
The pleasant day, upon a couch at ease.
It was a poet's house who keeps the keys
Of pleasure's temple. Round about were hung
The glorious features of the bards who sung
In other ages—cold and sacred busts
Smiled at each other. Happy he who trusts
To clear Futurity his darling fame!
Then there were fauns and satyrs taking aim
At swelling apples with a frisky leap
And reaching fingers, 'mid a luscious heap
Of vine-leaves. Then there rose to view a fane
Of liny marble, and thereto a train
Of nymphs approaching fairly o'er the sward:
One, loveliest, holding her white hand toward
The dazzling sun-rise: two sisters sweet
Bending their graceful figures till they meet
Over the trippings of a little child:
And some are hearing, eagerly the wild
Thrilling liquidity of dewy piping.
See, in another picture, nymphs are wiping
Cherishingly Diana's timorous limbs;—
A fold of lawny mantle dabbling swims
At the bath's edge, and keeps a gentle motion
With the subsiding crystal: as when ocean
Heaves calmly its broad swelling smoothness o'er
Its rocky marge, and balances once more
The patient weeds; that now unshent by foam
Feel all about their undulating home.

Sappho's meek head was there half smiling down
At nothing; just as though the earnest frown
Of over thinking had that moment gone
From off her brow, and left her all alone.

Great Alfred's too, with anxious, pitying eyes,
As if he always listened to the sighs
Of the goaded world; and Kosciusko's worn
By horrid suffrance—mightily forlorn.

Petrarch, outstepping from the shady green,
Starts at the sight of Laura; nor can wean
His eyes from her sweet face. Most happy they!
For over them was seen a free display
Of out-spread wings, and from between them shone
The face of Poesy: from off her throne
She overlook'd things that I scarce could tell.
The very sense of where I was might well
Keep Sleep aloof: but more than that there came
Thought after thought to nourish up the flame
Within my breast; so that the morning light
Surprised me even from a sleepless night;
And up I rose refresh'd, and glad, and gay,
Resolving to begin that very day
These lines; and howsoever they be done,
I leave them as a father does his son.

ENDYMION
A POETIC ROMANCE
(1818)

'The stretched metre of an antique song.'

INSCRIBED
TO THE MEMORY OF
THOMAS CHATTERTON

NOTE TO ENDYMION

ROBERT BRIDGES, after saying that 'Keats was not making an allegory, but using a legend,' outlines this long poem. 'The general scheme is broad and simple. The four books correspond with the four elements—I. Earth; II. Fire—for it is more probable that this element has been somewhat lost sight of in its necessary modifications than that it was not intended in its proper home beneath the earth's crust; III. Under sea = Water; IV. Air; and these typify respectively—I. Natural beauty; II. The mysteries of earth; III. The secrets of death; IV. Spiritual freedom and satisfaction. The first idea needs little comment: the last three books are concerned with states of mind which, on his own confession, lay beyond the poet's experience; and here he must be regarded as a searcher for truth rather than as full prophet.' But the inner meaning of *Endymion* is open to everlasting discussion, as also Dr. Bridges's decision that Keats's treatment of his feminine characters is superficial and unworthy. Bridges however is tolerably content with the portrait of Peona, whom he supposes to be drawn from his brother George's wife ('a lady who has no aspirations after the moon.')

It is, as Keats himself knew, in the incidental beauties of *Endymion* that its life really shines, and these considered altogether undeniably assert that poetry can be luxurious and, as we now say, escapist. Even his thought in this work is rather a disorderly revel of thoughts than a controlled intellectual essay. It is a poem of 'quotations,' from the phrase to the paragraph.

Endymion

BOOK ONE

A THING of beauty is a joy for ever:
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.
Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing
A flowery band to bind us to the earth,
Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth
Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,
Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darkened ways
Made for our searching: yes, in spite of all,
Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
From our dark spirits. Such the sun, the moon,
Trees old and young, sprouting a shady boon
For simple sheep; and such are daffodils
With the green world they live in; and clear rills
That for themselves a cooling covert make
'Gainst the hot season; the mid forest brake,
Rich with a sprinkling of fair musk-rose blooms:
And such too is the grandeur of the dooms
We have imagined for the mighty dead;
All lovely tales that we have heard or read:
An endless fountain of immortal drink,
Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink.

Nor do we merely feel these essences
For one short hour; no, even as the trees
That whisper round a temple become soon
Dear as the temple's self, so does the moon,
The passion poesy, glories infinite,
Haunts us till they become a cheering light
Unto our souls, and bound to us so fast,
That, whether there be shine, or gloom o'er-cast,
They alway must be with us, or we die.

Therefore, 'tis with full happiness that I
Will trace the story of Endymion.
The very music of the name has gone
Into my being, and each pleasant scene
Is growing fresh before me as the green
Of our own vallies: so I will begin
Now while I cannot hear the city's din;
Now while the early budders are just new,
And run in mazes of the youngest hue
About old forests; while the willow trails
Its delicate amber; and the dairy pails
Bring home increase of milk. And, as the year
Grows lush in juicy stalks, I'll smoothly steer
My little boat, for many quiet hours,
With streams that deepen freshly into bowers.
Many and many a verse I hope to write,
Before the daisies, vermeil rimm'd and white,
Hide in deep herbage; and ere yet the bees
Hum about globes of clover and sweet peas,
I must be near the middle of my story.
O may no wintry season, bare and hoary,
See it half finish'd: but let Autumn bold,
With universal tinge of sober gold,
Be all about me when I make an end.
And now at once, adventuresome, I send
My herald thought into a wilderness:
There let its trumpet blow, and quickly dress
My uncertain path with green, that I may speed
Easily onward, through flowers and weed.

Upon the sides of Latmos was outspread
A mighty forest; for the moist earth fed
So plenteously all weed-hidden roots
Into o'er-hanging boughs, and precious fruits.
And it had gloomy shades, sequestered deep,
Where no man went; and if from shepherd's keep
A lamb strayed far a-down those inmost glens,
Never again saw he the happy pens
Whither his brethren, bleating with content,
Over the hills at every nightfall went.
Among the shepherds, 'twas believed ever,
That not one fleecy lamb which thus did sever

From the white flock, but pass'd unworried
By angry wolf, or pard with prying head,
Until it came to some unfooted plains
Where fed the herds of Pan: ay great his gains
Who thus one lamb did lose. Paths there were many,
Winding through palmy fern, and rushes fenny,
And ivy banks; all leading pleasantly
To a wide lawn, whence one could only see
Stems thronging all around between the swell
Of turf and slanting branches: who could tell
The freshness of the space of heaven above,
Edg'd round with dark tree tops? through which a dove
Would often beat its wings, and often too
A little cloud would move across the blue.

Full in the middle of this pleasantness
There stood a marble altar, with a tress
Of flowers budded newly; and the dew
Had taken fairy phantasies to strew
Daisies upon the sacred sward last eve.
And so the dawned light in pomp receive.
For 'twas the morn: Apollo's upward fire
Made every eastern cloud a silvery pyre
Of brightness so unsullied, that therein
A melancholy spirit well might win
Oblivion, and melt out his essence fine
Into the winds: rain-scented eglantine
Gave temperate sweets to that well-wooing sun;
The lark was lost in him; cold springs had run
To warm their chilliest bubbles in the grass;
Man's voice was on the mountains; and the mass
Of nature's lives and wonders puls'd tenfold,
To feel this sun-rise and its glories old.

Now while the silent workings of the dawn
Were busiest, into that self-same lawn
All suddenly, with joyful cries, there sped
A troop of little children garlanded;
Who gathering round the altar, seemed to pry
Earnestly round as wishing to espy
Some folk of holiday: nor had they waited
For many moments, ere their ears were sated

With a faint breath of music, which ev'n then
Fill'd out its voice, and died away again.
Within a little space again it gave
Its airy swellings, with a gentle wave,
To light-hung leaves, in smoothest echoes breaking
Through copse-clad vallies,—ere their death, o'ertaking
The surgy murmurs of the lonely sea.

And now, as deep into the wood as we
Might mark a lynx's eye, there glimmered light
Fair faces and a rush of garments white,
Plainer and plainer shewing, till at last,
Into the widest alley they all past,
Making directly for the woodland altar.
O kindly muse! let not my weak tongue falter
In telling of this goodly company,
Of their old piety, and of their glee:
But let a portion of ethereal dew
Fall on my head, and presently unmew
My soul; that I may dare, in wayfaring,
To stammer where old Chaucer used to sing.

Leading the way, young damsels danced along,
Bearing the burden of a shepherd song;
Each having a white wicker over brimm'd,
With April's tender younglings: next, well trimm'd,
A crowd of shepherds with as sunburnt looks
As may be read of in Arcadian books;
Such as sat listening round Apollo's pipe,
When the great deity, for earth too ripe,
Let his divinity o'er-flowing die
In music, through the vales of Thessaly:
Some idly trailed their sheep-hooks on the ground,
And some kept up a shrilly mellow sound
With ebon-tipped flutes: close after these,
Now coming from beneath the forest trees,
A venerable priest full soberly,
Begirt with ministring looks: alway his eye
Stedfast upon the matted turf he kept,
And after him his sacred vestments swept.
From his right hand there swung a vase, milk-white,
Of mingled wine, out-sparkling generous light;

And in his left he held a basket full
Of all sweet herbs that searching eye could cull:
Wild thyme, and valley-lillies whiter still
Than Leda's love, and cresses from the rill.
His aged head, crowned with beechen wreath,
Seem'd like a poll of ivy in the teeth
Of winter hoar. Then came another crowd
Of shepherds, lifting in due time aloud
Their share of the ditty. After them appear'd,
Up-followed by a multitude that rear'd
Their voices to the clouds, a fair wrought car,
Easily rolling so as scarce to mar
The freedom of three steeds of dapple brown:
Who stood therein did seem of great renown
Among the throng. His youth was fully blown,
Showing like Ganymede to manhood grown;
And, for those simple times, his garments were
A chieftain king's: beneath his breast, half bare,
Was hung a silver bugle, and between
His nervy knees there lay a boar-spear keen.
A smile was on his countenance; he seem'd,
To common lookers on, like one who dream'd
Of idleness in groves Elysian:
But there were some who feelingly could scan
A lurking trouble in his nether lip,
And see that oftentimes the reins would slip
Through his forgotten hands: then would they sigh,
And think of yellow leaves, of owlets' cry,
Of logs pil'd solemnly.—Ah, well-a-day,
Why should our young Endymion pine away!

Soon the assembly, in a circle rang'd,
Stood silent round the shrine: each look was chang'd
To sudden veneration: women meek
Beckon'd their sons to silence; while each cheek
Of virgin bloom paled gently for slight fear.
Endymion too, without a forest peer,
Stood, wan, and pale, and with an awed face,
Among his brothers of the mountain chase.
In midst of all, the venerable priest
Eyed them with ioy from greatest to the least,
And, after lifting up his aged hands,

Thus spake he: 'Men of Latmos! shepherd bands!
Whose care it is to guard a thousand flocks:
Whether descended from beneath the rocks
That overtop your mountains; whether come
From vallies where the pipe is never dumb;
Or from your swelling downs, where sweet air stirs
Blue hare-bells lightly, and where prickly furze
Buds lavish gold; or ye, whose precious charge
Nibble their fill at ocean's very marge,
Whose mellow reeds are touch'd with sounds forlorn
By the dim echoes of old Triton's horn:
Mothers and wives! who day by day prepare
The scrip, with needments, for the mountain air;
And all ye gentle girls who foster up
Udderless lambs, and in a little cup
Will put choice honey for a favoured youth:
Yea, every one attend! for in good truth
Our vows are wanting to our great god Pan.
Are not our lowing heifers sleeker than
Night-swollen mushrooms? Are not our wide plains
Speckled with countless fleeces? Have not rains
Green'd over April's lap? No howling sad
Sickens our fearful ewes; and we have had
Great bounty from Endymion our lord.
The earth is glad: the merry lark has pour'd
His early song against yon breezy sky,
That spreads so clear o'er our solemnity.'

Thus ending, on the shrine he heap'd a spire
Of teeming sweets, enkindling sacred fire;
Anon he stain'd the thick and spongy sod
With wine, in honor of the shepherd-god.
Now while the earth was drinking it, and while
Bay leaves were crackling in the fragrant pile,
And gummy frankincense was sparkling bright
'Neath smothering parsley, and a hazy light
Spread greyly eastward, thus a chorus sang:

'O THOU, whose mighty palace roof doth hang
From jagged trunks, and overshadoweth
Eternal whispers, glooms, the birth, life, death
Of unseen flowers in heavy peacefulness;

Who lov'st to see the hamadryads dress
Their ruffled locks where meeting hazels darken;
And through whole solemn hours dost sit, and hearken
The dreary melody of bedded reeds—
In desolate places, where dank moisture breeds
The pipy hemlock to strange overgrowth;
Bethinking thee, how melancholy loth
Thou wast to lose fair Syrinx—do thou now,
By thy love's milky brow!
By all the trembling mazes that she ran,
Hear us, great Pan!

'O thou, for whose soul-soothing quiet, turtles
Passion their voices cooingly 'mong myrtles,
What time thou wanderest at eventide
Through sunny meadows, that outskirt the side
Of thine enmossed realms: O thou, to whom
Broad leaved fig trees even now foredoom
Their ripen'd fruitage; yellow girted bees
Their golden honeycombs; our village leas
Their fairest blossom'd beans and popped corn;
The chuckling linnet its five young unborn,
To sing for thee; low creeping strawberries
Their summer coolness; pent up butterflies
Their freckled wings; yea, the fresh budding year
All its completions—be quickly near,
By every wind that nods the mountain pine,
O forester divine!

'Thou, to whom every faun and satyr flies
For willing service; whether to surprise
The squatted hare while in half sleeping fit;
Or upward ragged precipices flit
To save poor lambkins from the eagle's maw;
Or by mysterious enticement draw
Bewildered shepherds to their path again;
Or to tread breathless round the frothy main,
And gather up all fancifullest shells
For thee to tumble into Naiads' cells,
And, being hidden, laugh at their out-peeping;
Or to delight thee with fantastic leaping,
The while they pelt each other on the crown

With silvery oak apples, and fir cones brown—
By all the echoes that about thee ring,
Hear us, O satyr king!

‘O Harkener to the loud clapping shears,
While ever and anon to his shorn peers
A ram goes bleating: Winder of the horn,
When snouted wild-boars routing tender corn
Anger our huntsmen: Breather round our farms,
To keep off mildews, and all weather harms:
Strange ministrant of undescribed sounds,
That come a swooning over hollow grounds,
And whither drearily on barren moors:
Dread opener of the mysterious doors
Leading to universal knowledge—see,
Great son of Dryope,
The many that are come to pay their vows
With leaves about their brows!

‘Be still the unimaginable lodge
For solitary thinkings; such as dodge
Conception to the very bourn of heaven,
Then leave the naked brain: be still the leaven,
That spreading in this dull and clodded earth
Gives it a touch ethereal—a new birth:
Be still a symbol of immensity;
A firmament reflected in a sea;
An element filling the space between,
An unknown—but no more: we humbly screen
With uplift hands our foreheads, lowly bending,
And giving out a shout most heaven rending,
Conjure thee to receive our humble Pæan,
Upon thy Mount Lycean!’

Even while they brought the burden to a close,
A shout from the whole multitude arose,
That lingered in the air like dying rolls
Of abrupt thunder, when Ionian shoals
Of dolphins bob their noses through the brine.
Meantime, on shady levels, mossy fine,
Young companies nimbly began dancing
To the swift treble pipe, and humming string.

Aye, those fair living forms swam heavenly
To tunes forgotten—out of memory:
Fair creatures! whose young children's children bred
Thermopylæ its heroes—not yet dead,
But in old marbles ever beautiful.
High genitors, unconscious did they cull
Time's sweet first-fruits—they danc'd to weariness,
And then in quiet circles did they press
The hillock turf, and caught the latter end
Of some strange history, potent to send
A young mind from its bodily tenement.
Or they might watch the quoit-pitchers, intent
On either side: pitying the sad death
Of Hyacinthus, when the cruel breath
Of Zephyr slew him,—Zephyr penitent,
Who now, ere Phoebus mounts the firmament,
Fondles the flower amid the sobbing rain.
The archers too, upon a wider plain,
Beside the feathery whizzing of the shaft,
And the dull twanging bowstring, and the raft
Branch down sweeping from a tall ash top,
Call'd up a thousand thoughts to envelope
Those who would watch. Perhaps, the trembling knee
And frantic gape of lonely Niobe,
Poor, lonely Niobe! when her lovely young
Were dead and gone, and her caressing tongue
Lay a lost thing upon her paly lip,
And very, very deadliness did nip
Her motherly cheeks. Arous'd from this sad mood
By one, who at a distance loud halloo'd,
Uplifting his strong bow into the air,
Many might after brighter visions stare:
After the Argonauts, in blind amaze
Tossing about on Neptune's restless ways,
Until, from the horizon's vaulted side,
There shot a golden splendour far and wide,
Spangling those million poutings of the brine
With quivering ore: 'twas even an awful shine
From the exaltation of Apollo's bow;
A heavenly beacon in their dreary woe.
Who thus were ripe for high contemplating,
Might turn their steps towards the sober ring

Where sat Endymion and the aged priest
'Mong shepherds gone in eld, whose looks increas'd
The silvery setting of their mortal star.
There they discours'd upon the fragile bar
That keeps us from our homes ethereal;
And what our duties there: to nightly call
Vesper, the beauty-crest of summer weather;
To summon all the downiest clouds together
For the sun's purple couch; to emulate
In ministring the potent rule of fate
With speed of fire-tailed exhalations;
To tint her pallid cheek with bloom, who cons
Sweet pocsy by moonlight: besides these,
A world of other unguess'd offices.
Anon they wander'd, by divine converse,
Into Elysium; vicing to rehearse
Each one his own anticipated bliss.
One felt heart-certain that he could not miss
His quick gone love, among fair blossom'd boughs,
Where every zephyr-sigh pouts, and endows
Her lips with music for the welcoming.
Another wish'd, mid that eternal spring,
To meet his rosy child, with feathery sails,
Sweeping, eye-earnestly, through almond vales:
Who, suddenly, should stoop through the smooth wind,
And with the balmiest leaves his temples bind;
And, ever after, through those regions be
His messenger, his little Mercury.
Some were athirst in soul to see again
Their fellow huntsmen o'er the wide champaign
In times long past; to sit with them, and talk
Of all the chances in their earthly walk;
Comparing, joyfully, their plenteous stores
Of happiness, to when upon the moors,
Benighted, close they huddled from the cold.
And shar'd their famish'd srips. Thus all out-told
Their fond imaginations,—saving him
Whose eyelids curtain'd up their jewels dim,
Endymion: yet hourly had he striven
To hide the cankering venom, that had driven
His fainting recollections. Now indeed
His senses had swoon'd off: he did not heed

The sudden silence, or the whispers low,
Or the old eyes dissolving at his woe,
Or anxious calls, or close of trembling palms,
Or maiden's sigh, that grief itself embalms:
But in the self-same fixed trance he kept,
Like one who on the earth had never stept.
Aye, even as dead-still as a marble man,
Frozen in that old tale Arabian.

Who whispers him so pantingly and close?
Peona, his sweet sister: of all those,
His friends, the dearest. Hushing signs she made,
And breath'd a sister's sorrow to persuade
A yielding up, a cradling on her care.
Her eloquence did breathe away the curse:
She led him, like some midnight spirit nurse
Of happy changes in emphatic dreams,
Along a path between two little streams,—
Guarding his forehead, with her round elbow,
From low-grown branches, and his footsteps slow
From stumbling over stumps and streamlets small;
Until they came to where these streamlets fall,
With mingled bubblings and a gentle rush,
Into a river, clear, brimful, and flush
With crystal mocking of the trees and sky.
A little shallop, floating there hard by,
Pointed its beak over the fringed bank;
And soon it lightly dipt, and rose, and sank,
And dipt again, with the young couple's weight,—
Peona guiding, through the water straight,
Towards a bowery island opposite;
Which gaining presently, she steered light
Into a shady, fresh, and ripply cove,
Where nested was an arbour, overwove
By many a summer's silent fingering;
To whose cool bosom she was used to bring
Her playmates, with their needle broidery,
And minstrel memories of times gone by.

So she was gently glad to see him laid
Under her favourite bower's quiet shade,
On her own couch, new made of flower leaves,

Dried carefully on the cooler side of sheaves
When last the sun his autumn tresses shook,
And the tann'd harvesters rich armfuls took.
Soon was he quieted to slumbrous rest:
But, ere it crept upon him, he had prest
Peona's busy hand against his lips,
And still, a sleeping, held her finger-tips
In tender pressure. And as a willow keeps
A patient watch over the stream that creeps
Windingly by it, so the quiet maid
Held her in peace: so that a whispering blade
Of grass, a wailful gnat, a bee bustling
Down in the blue-bells, or a wren light rustling
Among sere leaves and twigs, might all be heard.

O magic sleep! O comfortable bird,
That broodest o'er the troubled sea of the mind
Till it is hush'd and smooth! O unconfin'd
Restraint! imprisoned liberty! great key
To golden palaces, strange minstrelsy,
Fountains grotesque, new trees, bespangled caves,
Echoing grottos, full of tumbling waves
And moonlight; aye, to all the mazy world
Of silvery enchantment!—who, upfurl'd
Beneath thy drowsy wing a triple hour,
But renovates and lives?—Thus, in the bower,
Endymion was calm'd to life again.
Opening his eyelids with a healthier brain,
He said: 'I feel this thine endearing love
All through my bosom: thou art as a dove
Trembling its closed eyes and sleeked wings
About me; and the pearliest dew not brings
Such morning incense from the fields of May,
As do those brighter drops that twinkling stray
From those kind eyes,—the very home and haunt
Of sisterly affection. Can I want
Aught else, aught nearer heaven, than such tears?
Yet dry them up, in bidding hence all fears
That, any longer, I will pass my days
Alone and sad. No, I will once more raise
My voice upon the mountain-heights; once more
Make my horn parley from their foreheads hoar:

Again my trooping hounds their tongues shall loll
Around the breathed boar: again I'll poll
The fair-grown yew tree, for a chosen bow:
And, when the pleasant sun is getting low,
Again I'll linger in a sloping mead
To hear the speckled thrushes, and see feed
Our idle sheep. So be thou cheered sweet,
And, if thy lute is here, softly intreat
My soul to keep in its resolved course.'

Hereat Peona, in their silver source,
Shut her pure sorrow drops with glad exclaim,
And took a lute, from which there pulsing came
A lively prelude, fashioning the way
In which her voice should wander. 'Twas a lay
More subtle cadenced, more forest wild
Than Dryope's lone lulling of her child;
And nothing since has floated in the air
So mournful strange. Surely some influence rare
Went, spiritual, through the damsel's hand;
For still, with Delphic emphasis, she spann'd
The quick invisible strings, even though she saw
Endymion's spirit melt away and thaw
Before the deep intoxication.
But soon she came, with sudden burst, upon
Her self-possession—swung the lute aside,
And earnestly said: 'Brother, 'tis vain to hide
That thou dost know of things mysterious,
Immortal, starry; such alone could thus
Weigh down thy nature. Hast thou sinn'd in aught
Offensive to the heavenly powers? Caught
A Paphian dove upon a message sent?
Thy deathful bow against some deer-herd bent,
Sacred to Dian? Haply, thou hast seen
Her naked limbs among the alders green;
And that, alas! is death. No, I can trace
Something more high perplexing in thy face!'

Endymion look'd at her, and press'd her hand,
And said, 'Art thou so pale, who wast so bland
And merry in our meadows? How is this?
Tell me thine ailment: tell me all amiss!—

Ah! thou hast been unhappy at the change
Wrought suddenly in me. What indeed more strange?
Or more complete to overwhelm surmise?
Ambition is no sluggard: 'tis no prize,
That toiling years would put within my grasp,
That I have sigh'd for: with so deadly gasp
No man e'er panted for a mortal love.
So all have set my heavier grief above
These things which happen. Rightly have they done:
I, who still saw the horizontal sun
Heave his broad shoulder o'er the edge of the world,
Out-facing Lucifer, and then had hurl'd
My spear aloft, as signal for the chace—
I, who, for very sport of heart, would race
With my own steed from Araby; pluck down
A vulture from his towery perching; frown
A lion into growling, loth retire—
To lose, at once, all my toil breeding fire,
And sink thus low! but I will ease my breast
Of secret grief, here in this bowery nest.

'This river does not see the naked sky,
Till it begins to progress silverly
Around the western border of the wood,
Whence, from a certain spot, its winding flood
Seems at the distance like a crescent moon:
And in that nook, the very pride of June,
Had I been used to pass my weary eves;
The rather for the sun unwilling leaves
So dear a picture of his sovereign power,
And I could witness his most kingly hour,
When he doth tighten up the golden reins,
And paces leisurely down amber plains
His snorting four. Now when his chariot last
Its beams against the zodiac-lion cast,
There blossom'd suddenly a magic bed
Of sacred ditamy, and poppies red:
At which I wondered greatly, knowing well
That but one night had wrought this flowery spell;
And, sitting down close by, began to muse
What it might mean. Perhaps, thought I, Morpheus,
In passing here, his owlet pinions shook;

Or, it may be, ere matron Night uptook
Her ebon urn, young Mercury, by stealth,
Had dipt his rod in it: such garland wealth
Came not by common growth. Thus on I thought,
Until my head was dizzy and distraught.
Moreover, through the dancing poppies stole
A breeze, most softly lulling to my soul;
And shaping visions all about my sight
Of colours, wings, and bursts of spangly light;
The which became more strange, and strange, and dim,
And then were gulph'd in a tumultuous swim:
And then I fell asleep. Ah, can I tell
The enchantment that afterwards befel?
Yet it was but a dream: yet such a dream
That never tongue, although it overteem
With mellow utterance, like a cavern spring,
Could figure out and to conception bring
All I beheld and felt. Methought I lay
Watching the zenith, where the milky way
Among the stars in virgin splendour pours;
And travelling my eye, until the doors
Of heaven appear'd to open for my flight,
I became loth and fearful to alight
From such high soaring by a downward glance:
So kept me stedfast in that airy trance,
Spreading imaginary pinions wide.
When, presently, the stars began to glide,
And faint away, before my eager view
At which I sigh'd that I could not pursue,
And dropt my vision to the horizon's verge;
And lo! from opening clouds, I saw emerge
The loveliest moon, that ever silver'd o'er
A shell for Neptune's goblet: she did soar
So passionately bright, my dazzled soul
Commingling with her argent spheres did roll
Through clear and cloudy, even when she went
At last into a dark and vapoury tent—
Whereat, methought, the lidless-eyed train
Of planets all were in the blue again.
To commune with those orbs, once more I rais'd
My sight right upward: but it was quite dazed
By a bright something, sailing down apace,

Making me quickly veil my eyes and face:
Again I look'd, and, O ye deities,
Who from Olympus watch our destinies!
Whence that completed form of all completeness?
Whence came that high perfection of all sweetness?
Speak, stubborn earth, and tell me where, O where
Hast thou a symbol of her golden hair?
Not oat-sheaves drooping in the western sun;
Not—thy soft hand, fair sister! let me shun
Such follying before thee—yet she had,
Indeed, locks bright enough to make me mad;
And they were simply gordian'd up and braided,
Leaving, in naked comeliness, unshaded,
Her pearl round ears, white neck, and orbéd brow;
The which were blended in, I know not how,
With such a paradise of lips and eyes,
Blush-tinted cheeks, half smiles, and faintest sighs,
That, when I think thereon, my spirit clings
And plays about its fancy, till the stings
Of human neighbourhood envenom all.
Unto what awful power shall I call?
To what high fane?—Ah! see her hovering feet,
More bluely vein'd, more soft, more whitely sweet
Than those of sea-born Venus, when she rose
From out her cradle shell. The wind out-blows
Her scarf into a fluttering pavillion;
'Tis blue, and over-spangled with a million
Of little eyes, as though thou wert to shed,
Over the darkest, lushest blue-bell bed,
Handfuls of daisies.'—'Endymion, how strange!
Dream within dream!'—'She took an airy range,
And then, towards me, like a very maid,
Came blushing, waning, willing, and afraid,
And press'd me by the hand: Ah! 'twas too much;
Methought I fainted at the charmed touch,
Yet held my recollection, even as one
Who dives three fathoms where the waters run
Gurgling in beds of coral: for anon,
I felt upmounted in that region
Where falling stars dart their artillery forth,
And eagles struggle with the buffeting north
That ballances the heavy meteor-stone;—

Felt too, I was not fearful, nor alone,
But lapp'd and lull'd along the dangerous sky.
Soon, as it seem'd, we left our journeying high,
And straightway into frightful eddies swoop'd;
Such as ay muster where grey time has scoop'd
Huge dens and caverns in a mountain's side:
There hollow sounds arous'd me, and I sigh'd
To faint once more by looking on my bliss—
I was distracted; madly did I kiss
The wooing arms which held me, and did give
My eyes at once to death: but 'twas to live,
To take in draughts of life from the gold fount
Of kind and passionate looks; to count, and count
The moments, by some greedy help that seem'd
A second self, that each might be redeem'd
And plunder'd of its load of blessedness.
Ah, desperate mortal! I e'en dar'd to press
Her very cheek against my crowned lip,
And, at that moment, felt my body dip
Into a warmer air: a moment more,
Our feet were soft in flowers. There was store
Of newest joys upon that alp. Sometimes
A scent of violets, and blossoming limes,
Loiter'd around us; then of honey cells,
Made delicate from all white-flower bells;
And once, above the edges of our nest,
An arch face peep'd,—an Oread as I guess'd.

'Why did I dream that sleep o'er-power'd me
In midst of all this heaven? Why not see,
Far off, the shadows of his pinions dark,
And stare them from me? But no, like a spark
That needs must die, although its little beam
Reflects upon a diamond, my sweet dream
Fell into nothing—into stupid sleep.
And so it was, until a gentle creep,
A careful moving caught my waking ears,
And up I started: Ah! my sighs, my tears,
My clenched hands;—for lo! the poppies hung
Dew-dabbled on their stalks, the ouzel sung
A heavy ditty, and the sullen day
Had chidden herald Hesperus away,

With leaden looks: the solitary breeze
Bluster'd, and slept, and its wild self did tease
With wayward melancholy; and I thought,
Mark me, Peona! that sometimes it brought
Faint fare-thee-wells, and sigh-shrilled adieus!—
Away I wander'd—all the pleasant hues
Of heaven and earth had faded: deepest shades
Were deepest dungeons; heaths and sunny glades
Were full of pestilent light; our taintless rills
Seem'd sooty, and o'er-spread with upturn'd gills
Of dying fish; the vermeil rose had blown
In frightful scarlet, and its thorns out-grown
Like spiked aloe. If an innocent bird
Before my heedless footsteps stirr'd, and stirr'd
In little journeys, I beheld in it
A disguis'd demon, missioned to knit
My soul with under darkness; to entice
My stumblings down some monstrous precipice:
Therefore I eager followed, and did curse
The disappointment. Time, that aged nurse,
Rock'd me to patience. Now, thank gentle heaven!
These things, with all their comfortings, are given
To my down-sunken hours, and with thee
Sweet sister, help to stem the ebbing sea
Of weary life.'

Thus ended he, and both
Sat silent: for the maid was very loth
To answer; feeling well that breathed words
Would all be lost, unheard, and vain as swords
Against the enchased crocodile, or leaps
Of grasshoppers against the sun. She weeps,
And wonders; struggles to devise some blame;
To put on such a look as would say, *Shame*
On this poor weakness! but, for all her strife,
She could as soon have crush'd away the life
From a sick dove. At length, to break the pause,
She said with trembling chance: 'Is this the cause?
This all? Yet it is strange, and sad, alas!
That one who through this middle earth should pass
Most like a sojourning demi-god, and leave
His name upon the harp-string, should achieve

No higher bard than simple maidenhood,
Singing alone, and fearfully,—how the blood
Left his young cheek; and how he used to stray
He knew not where; and how he would say, *nay*,
If any said 'twas love: and yet 'twas love;
What could it be but love? How a ring-dove
Let fall a sprig of yew tree in his path;
And how he died: and then, that love doth scathe,
The gentle heart, as northern blasts do roses;
And then the ballad of his sad life closes
With sighs, and an alas!—Endymion!
Be rather in the trumpet's mouth,—anon
Among the winds at large—that all may hearken!
Although, before the crystal heavens darken,
I watch and dote upon the silver lakes
Pictur'd in western cloudiness, that takes
The semblance of gold rocks and bright gold sands,
Islands, and creeks, and amber-fretted strands
With horses prancing o'er them, palaces
And towers of amethyst,—would I so tease
My pleasant days, because I could not mount
Into those regions? The Morphean fount
Of that fine element that visions, dreams,
And fitful whims of sleep are made of, streams
Into its airy channels with so subtle,
So thin a breathing, not the spider's shuttle,
Circled a million times within the space
Of a swallow's nest-door, could delay a trace,
A tinting of its quality: how light
Must dreams themselves be; seeing they're more slight
Than the mere nothing that engenders them!
Then wherefore sully the entrusted gem
Of high and noble life with thoughts so sick?
Why pierce high-fronted honour to the quick
For nothing but a dream?' Hereat the youth
Look'd up: a conflicting of shame and ruth
Was in his plaited brow: yet, his eyelids
Widened a little, as when Zephyr bids
A little breeze to creep between the fans
Of careless butterflies: amid his pains
He seem'd to taste a drop of manna-dew,
Full palatable; and a colour grew
Upon his cheek, while thus he lifeful spake.

'Peona! ever have I long'd to slake
My thirst for the world's praises: nothing base,
No merely slumberous phantasm, could unlace
The stubborn canvas for my voyage prepar'd—
Though now 'tis tatter'd; leaving my bark bar'd
And sullenly drifting: yet my higher hope
Is of too wide, too rainbow-large a scope,
To fret at myriads of earthly wrecks.
Wherein lies happiness? In that which beck
Our ready minds to fellowship divine,
A fellowship with essence; till we shine,
Full alchemiz'd, and free of space. Behold
The clear religion of heaven! Fold
A rose leaf round thy finger's taperness,
And soothe thy lips: hist, when the airy stress
Of music's kiss impregnates the free winds,
And with a sympathetic touch unbinds
Æolian magic from their lucid wombs:
Then old songs waken from enclouded tombs;
Old ditties sigh above their father's grave;
Ghosts of melodious prophecyings rave
Round every spot where trod Apollo's foot;
Bronze clarions awake, and faintly bruit,
Where long ago a giant battle was;
And, from the turf, a lullaby doth pass
In every place where infant Orpheus slept.
Feel we these things?—that moment have we stept
Into a sort of oneness, and our state
Is like a floating spirit's. But there are
Richer entanglements, enthrallments far
More self-destroying, leading, by degrees,
To the chief intensity: the crown of these
Is made of love and friendship, and sits high
Upon the forehead of humanity.
All its more ponderous and bulky worth
Is friendship, whence there ever issues forth
A steady splendour; but at the tip-top,
There hangs by unseen film, an orb'd drop
Of light, and that is love: its influence,
Thrown in our eyes, genders a novel sense,
At which we start and fret; till in the end,
Melting into its radiance, we blend,

Mingle, and so become a part of it,—
Nor with aught else can our souls interknit
So wingedly: when we combine therewith,
Life's self is nourish'd by its proper pith,
And we are nurtured like a pelican brood.
Aye, so delicious is the unsating food,
That men, who might have tower'd in the van
Of all the congregated world, to fan
And winnow from the coming step of time
All chaff of custom, wipe away all slime
Left by men-slugs and human serpentry,
Have been content to let occasion die,
Whilst they did sleep in love's elysium.
And, truly, I would rather be struck dumb,
Than speak against this ardent listlessness:
For I have ever thought that it might bless
The world with benefits unknowingly;
As does the nightingale, upperched high,
And cloister'd among cool and bunched leaves—
She sings but to her love, nor e'er conceives
How tiptoe Night holds back her dark-grey hood.
Just so may love, although 'tis understood
The mere commingling of passionate breath,
Produce more than our searching witnesseth:
What I know not: but who, of men, can tell
That flowers would bloom, or that green fruit would swell
To melting pulp, that fish would have bright mail,
The earth its dower of river, wood, and vale,
The meadows runnels, runnels pebble-stones,
The seed its harvest, or the lute its tones.
Tones ravishment, or ravishment its sweet,
If human souls did never kiss and greet?

'Now, if this earthly love has power to make
Men's being mortal, immortal; to shake
Ambition from their memories, and brim,
Their measure of content; what merest whim,
Seems all this poor endeavour after fame,
To one, who keeps within his stedfast aim
A love immortal, an immortal too.
Look not so wilder'd; for these things are true,
And never can be born of atomies

That buzz about our slumbers, like brain-flies,
Leaving us fancy-sick. No, no, I'm sure,
My restless spirit never could endure
To brood so long upon one luxury,
Unless it did, though fearfully, espy
A hope beyond the shadow of a dream.
My sayings will the less obscured seem,
When I have told thee how my waking sight
Has made me scruple whether that same night
Was pass'd in dreaming. Harken, sweet Peona!
Beyond the matron-temple of Latona,
Which we should see but for these darkening boughs,
Lies a deep hollow, from whose ragged brows
Bushes and trees do lean all round athwart,
And meet so nearly, that with wings outtaught,
And spreaded tail, a vulture could not glide
Past them, but he must brush on every side.
Some moulder'd steps lead into this cool cell,
Far as the slabbed margin of a well,
Whose patient level peeps its crystal eye
Right upward, through the bushes, to the sky.
Oft have I brought thee flowers, on their stalks set
Like vestal primroses, but dark velvet
Edges them round, and they have golden pits:
'Twas there I got them, from the gaps and slits
In a mossy stone, that sometimes was my seat,
When all above was faint with mid-day heat.
And there in strife no burning thoughts to heed,
I'd bubble up the water through a reed;
So reaching back to boy-hood: make me ships
Of moulted feathers, touchwood, alder chips,
With leaves stuck in them; and the Neptune be
Of their petty ocean. Oftener, heavily,
When love-lorn hours had left me less a child,
I sat contemplating the figures wild
Of o'er head clouds melting the mirror through.
Upon a day, while thus I watch'd, by flew
A cloudy Cupid, with his bow and quiver;
So plainly character'd, no breeze would shiver
The happy chance: so happy, I was fain
To follow it upon the open plain,
And, therefore, was just going; when, behold!

A wonder, fair as any I have told—
The same bright face I tasted in my sleep,
Smiling in the clear well. My heart did leap
Through the cool depth.—It mov'd as if to flee—
I started up, when lo! refreshfully,
There came upon my face, in plenteous showers,
Dew-drops, and dewy buds, and leaves, and flowers,
Wrapping all objects from my smothered sight,
Bathing my spirit in a new delight.
Aye, such a breathless honey-feel of bliss
Alone preserv'd me from the drear abyss
Of death, for the fair form had gone again.
Pleasure is oft a visitant; but pain
Clings cruelly to us, like the gnawing sloth
On the deer's tender haunches: late, and loth,
'Tis scar'd away by slow returning pleasure.
How sickening, how dark the dreadful leisure
Of weary days, made deeper exquisite,
By a fore-knowledge of unslumbrous night!
Like sorrow came upon me, heavier still,
Than when I wander'd from the poppy hill:
And a whole age of lingering moments crept
Sluggishly by, ere more contentment swept
Away at once the deadly yellow spleen.
Yes, thrice have I this fair enchantment seen;
Once more been tortured with renewed life.
When last the wintry gusts gave over strife
With the conquering sun of spring, and left the skies
Warm and serene, but yet with moistened eyes
In pity of the shatter'd infant buds,—
That time thou didst adorn, with amber studs,
My hunting cap, because I laugh'd and smil'd,
Chatted with thee, and many days exil'd
All torment from my breast;—'twas even then,
Straying about, yet, coop'd up in the den
Of helpless discontent,—hurling my lance
From place to place, and following at chance,
At last, by hap, through some young trees it struck,
And, plashing among bedded pebbles, stuck
In the middle of a brook,—whose silver ramble
Down twenty little falls, through reeds and bramble,
Tracing along, it brought me to a cave,

Whence it ran brightly forth, and white did lave
The nether sides of mossy stones and rock,—
'Mong which it gurgled blythe adieus, to mock
Its own sweet grief at parting. Overhead,
Hung a lush screen of drooping weeds, and spread
Thick, as to curtain up some wood-nymph's home.
'Ah! impious mortal, whither do I roam?'
Said I, low voic'd: 'Ah, whither! 'Tis the grot
'Of Proserpine, when Hell, obscure and hot,
'Doth her resign; and where her tender hands
'She dabbles, on the cool and sluicy sands:
'Or 'tis the cell of Echo, where she sits,
'And babbles thorough silence, till her wits
'Are gone in tender madness, and anon,
'Faints into sleep, with many a dying tone
'Of sadness. O that she would take my vows,
'And breathe them sighingly among the boughs,
'To sue her gentle ears for whose fair head,
'Daily, I pluck sweet flowerets from their bed,
'And weave them dyingly—send honey-whispers
'Round every leaf, that all those gentle lispers
'May sigh my love unto her pitying!
'O charitable echo! hear, and sing
'This ditty to her!—tell her'—so I stay'd
My foolish tongue, and listening, half afraid,
Stood stupefied with my own empty folly,
And blushing for the freaks of melancholy.
Salt tears were coming, when I heard my name
Most fondly lipp'd, and then these accents came:
'Endymion! the cave is secreter
'Than the isle of Delos. Echo hence shall stir
'No sighs but sigh-warm kisses, or light noise
'Of thy combing hand, the while it travelling cloy
'And trembles through my labyrinthine hair.'
At that oppress'd I hurried in.—Ah! where
Are those swift moments? Whither are they fled?
I'll smile no more, Peona; nor will wed
Sorrow the way to death; but patiently
Bear up against it: so farewell, sad sigh;
And come instead demurest meditation,
To occupy me wholly, and to fashion
My pilgrimage for the world's dusky brink.

No more will I count over, link by link,
My chain of grief: no longer strive to find
A half-forgetfulness in mountain wind
Blustering about my ears: aye, thou shalt see,
Dearest of sisters, what my life shall be;
What a calm round of hours shall make my days.
There is a paly flame of hope that plays
Where'er I look: but yet, I'll say 'tis naught—
And here I bid it die. Have not I caught,
Already, a more healthy countenance?
By this the sun is setting; we may chance
Meet some of our near-dwellers with my car.'

This said, he rose, faint-smiling like a star
Through autumn mists, and took Peona's hand:
They stept into the boat, and launch'd from land.

BOOK TWO

O SOVEREIGN power of love! O grief! O balm!
All records, saving thine, come cool, and calm,
And shadowy, through the mist of passed years:
For others, good or bad, hatred and tears
Have become indolent; but touching thine,
One sigh doth echo, one poor sob doth pine,
One kiss brings honey-dew from buried days.
The woes of Troy, towers smothering o'er their blaze,
Stiff-holden shields, far-piercing spears, keen blades,
Struggling, and blood, and shrieks—all dimly fades
Into some backward corner of the brain;
Yet, in our very souls, we feel amain
The close of Troilus and Cressid sweet.
Hence, pageant history! hence, gilded cheat!
Swart planet in the universe of deeds!
Wide sea, that one continuous murmur breeds
Along the pebbled shore of memory!
Many old rotten-timber'd boats there be
Upon thy vaporous bosom, magnified
To goodly vessels; many a sail of pride,
And golden keel'd, is left unlaunch'd and dry.
But wherefore this? What care, though owl did fly
About the great Athenian admiral's mast?

What care, though striding Alexander past
The Indus with his Macedonian numbers?
Though old Ulysses tortured from his slumbers
The gluttoned Cyclops, what care?—Juliet leaning
Amid her window-flowers,—sighing,—weaning
Tenderly her fancy from its maiden snow,
Doth more avail than these: the silver flow
Of Hero's tears, the swoon of Imogen,
Fair Pastorella in the bandit's den,
Are things to brood on with more ardency
Than the death-day of empires. Fearfully
Must such conviction come upon his head,
Who, thus far, discontent, has dared to tread,
Without one muse's smile, or kind behest,
The path of love and poesy. But rest,
In chaffing restlessness, is yet more drear
Than to be crush'd, in striving to uprear
Love's standard on the battlements of song.
So once more days and nights aid me along,
Like legion'd soldiers.

Brain-sick shepherd prince,
What promise hast thou faithful guarded since
The day of sacrifice? Or, have new sorrows
Come with the constant dawn upon thy morrows?
Alas! 'tis his old grief. For many days,
Has he been wandering in uncertain ways:
Through wilderness, and woods of mossed oaks;
Counting his woe-worn minutes, by the strokes
Of the lone woodcutter; and listening still,
Hour after hour, to each lush-leav'd rill.
Now he is sitting by a shady spring,
And elbow-deep with feverous fingering
Stems the upbursting cold: a wild rose tree
Pavillions him in bloom, and he doth see
A bud which snares his fancy: lo! but now
He plucks it, dips its stalk in the water: how!
It swells, it buds, it flowers beneath his sight;
And, in the middle, there is softly pight
A golden butterfly; upon whose wings
There must be surely character'd strange things,
For with wide eye he wonders, and smiles oft.

Lightly this little herald flew aloft,
Follow'd by glad Endymion's clasped hands:
Onward it flies. From languor's sullen bands
His limbs are loos'd, and eager, on he hies
Dazzled to trace it in the sunny skies.
It seem'd he flew, the way so easy was;
And like a new-born spirit did he pass
Through the green evening quiet in the sun,
O'er many a heath, through many a woodland dun,
Through buried paths, where sleepy twilight dreams
The summer time away. One track unseams
A wooded cleft, and, far away, the blue
Of ocean fades upon him; then, anew,
He sinks adown a solitary glen,
Where there was never sound of mortal men,
Saving, perhaps, some snow-light cadences
Melting to silence, when upon the breeze
Some holy bark let forth an anthem sweet,
To cheer itself to Delphi. Still his feet
Went swift beneath the merry-winged guide,
Until it reached a splashing fountain's side
That, near a cavern's mouth, for ever pour'd
Unto the temperate air: then high it soar'd,
And, downward, suddenly began to dip,
As if, athirst with so much toil, 'twould sip
The crystal spout-head: so it did, with touch
Most delicate, as though afraid to smutch
Even with mealy gold the waters clear.
But, at that very touch, to disappear
So fairy-quick, was strange! Bewildered,
Endymion sought around, and shook each bed
Of covert flowers in vain; and then he flung
Himself along the grass. What gentle tongue,
What whisper disturb'd his gloomy rest?
It was a nymph uprisen to the breast
In the fountain's pebbly margin, and she stood
'Mong lilies, like the youngest of the brood.
To him her dripping hand she softly kist,
And anxiously began to plait and twist
Her ringlets round her fingers, saying: 'Youth!
Too long, alas, hast thou starv'd on the ruth,
The bitterness of love: too long indeed,

Seeing thou art so gentle. Could I weed
Thy soul of care, by heavens, I would offer
All the bright riches of my crystal coffer
To Amphitrite: all my clear-eyed fish,
Golden, or rainbow-sided, or purplish,
Vermilion-tailed, or finn'd with silvery gauze;
Yea, or my veined pebble-floor, that draws
A virgin light to the deep; my grotto-sands
Tawny and gold, ooz'd slowly from far lands
By my diligent springs; my level lilies, shells,
My charming rod, my potent river spells;
Yes, every thing, even to the pearly cup
Meander gave me,—for I bubbled up
To fainting creatures in a desert wild.
But woe is me, I am but as a child
To gladden thee; and all I dare to say,
Is, that I pity thee; that on this day
I've been thy guide; that thou must wander far
In other regions, past the scanty bar
To mortal steps, before thou can'st be ta'en
From every wasting sigh, from every pain,
Into the gentle bosom of thy love.
Why it is thus, one knows in heaven above:
But, a poor Naiad, I guess not. Farewell!
I have a ditty for my hollow cell.'

Hereat, she vanish'd from Endymion's gaze,
Who brooded o'er the water in amaze:
The dashing fount pour'd on, and where its pool
Lay, half asleep, in grass and rushes cool,
Quick waterflies and gnats were sporting still,
And fish were dimpling, as if good nor ill
Had fallen out that hour. The wanderer,
Holding his forehead, to keep off the burr
Of smothering fancies, patiently sat down;
And, while beneath the evening's sleepy frown
Glow-worms began to trim their starry lamps,
Thus breath'd he to himself: 'Whoso encamps
To take a fancied city of delight,
O what a wretch is he! and when 'tis his,
After long toil and travelling, to miss
The kernel of his hopes, how more than vile:

Yet, for him there's refreshment even in toil;
Another city doth he set about,
Free from the smallest pebble-bead of doubt
That he will seize on trickling honey-combs:
Alas, he finds them dry; and then he foams,
And onward to another city speeds.
But this is human life: the war, the deeds,
The disappointment, the anxiety,
Imagination's struggles, far and nigh,
All human; bearing in themselves this good,
That they are still the air, the subtle food,
To make us feel existence, and to shew
How quiet death is. Where soil is men grow,
Whether to weeds or flowers; but for me,
There is no depth to strike in: I can see
Nought earthly worth my compassing; so stand
Upon a misty, jutting head of land—
Alone? No, no; and by the Orphean lute,
When mad Eurydice is listening to't;
I'd rather stand upon this misty peak,
With not a thing to sigh for, or to seek,
But the soft shadow of my thrice-seen love,
Than be—I care not what. O meekest dove
Of heaven! O Cynthia, ten times bright and fair!
From thy blue throne, now filling all the air,
Glance but one little beam of temper'd light
Into my bosom, that the dreadful might
And tyranny of love be somewhat scar'd!
Yet do not so, sweet queen; one torment spar'd,
Would give a pang to jealous misery,
Worse than the torment's self: but rather tie
Large wings upon my shoulders, and point out
My love's far dwelling. Though the playful rout
Of Cupids shun thee, too divine art thou,
Too keen in beauty, for thy silver prow
Not to have dipp'd in love's most gentle stream.
O be propitious, nor severely deem
My madness impious; for, by all the stars
That tend thy bidding, I do think the bars
That kept my spirit in are burst—that I
Am sailing with thee through the dizzy sky!
How beautiful thou art! The world how deep!

How tremulous-dazzlingly the wheels sweep
Around their axle! Then these gleaming reins,
How lithe! When this thy chariot attains
Its airy goal, haply some bower veils
Those twilight eyes? Those eyes!—my spirit fails—
Dear goddess, help! or the wide-gaping air
Will gulph me—help!’—At this with madden’d stare,
And lifted hands, and trembling lips he stood;
Like old Deucalion mountain’d o’er the flood,
Or blind Orion hungry for the morn.
And, but from the deep cavern there was borne
A voice, he had been froze to senseless stone;
Nor sigh of his, nor plaint, nor passion’d moan
Had more been heard. Thus swell’d it forth: ‘Descend,
Young mountaineer! descend where alleys bend
Into the sparry hollows of the world!
Oft hast thou seen bolts of the thunder hurl’d
As from thy threshold; day by day hast been
A little lower than the chilly sheen
Of icy pinnacles, and dipp’dst thine arms
Into the deadening ether that still charms
Their marble being: now, as deep profound
As those are high, descend! He ne’er is crown’d
With immortality, who fears to follow
Where airy voices lead: so through the hollow,
The silent mysteries of earth, descend!’

He heard but the last words, nor could contend
One moment in reflection: for he fled
Into the fearful deep, to hide his head
From the clear moon, the trees, and coming madness.

’Twas far too strange, and wonderful for sadness;
Sharpening, by degrees, his appetite
To dive into the deepest. Dark, nor light,
The region; nor bright, nor sombre wholly,
But mingled up; a gleaming melancholy;
A dusky empire and its diadems;
One faint eternal eventide of gems.
Aye, millions sparkled on a vein of gold,
Along whose track the prince quick footsteps told,
With all its lines abrupt and angular:

Out-shooting sometimes, like a meteor-star,
Through a vast antre; then the metal woof,
Like Vulcan's rainbow, with some monstrous roof
Curves hugely: now, far in the deep abyss,
It seems an angry lightning, and doth hiss
Fancy into belief: anon it leads
Through winding passages, where sameness breeds
Vexing conceptions of some sudden change;
Whether to silver grotts, or giant range
Of sapphire columns, or fantastic bridge
Athwart a flood of crystal. On a ridge
Now fareth he, that o'er the vast beneath
Towers like an ocean-cliff, and whence he seeth
A hundred waterfalls, whose voices come
But as the murmuring surge. Chilly and numb
His bosom grew, when first he, far away,
Descried an orb'd diamond, set to fray
Old darkness from his throne: 'twas like the sun
Uprisen o'er chaos: and with such a stun
Came the amazement, that, absorb'd in it,
He saw not fiercer wonders—past the wit
Of any spirit to tell, but one of those
Who, when this planet's sphering time doth close,
Will be its high remembrancers: who they?
The mighty ones who have made eternal day
For Greece and England. While astonishment
With deep-drawn sighs was quieting, he went
Into a marble gallery, passing through
A mimic temple, so complete and true
In sacred custom, that he well nigh fear'd
To search it inwards; whence far off appear'd,
Through a long pillar'd vista, a fair shrine,
And, just beyond, on light tiptoe divine,
A quiver'd Dian. Stepping awfully,
The youth approach'd; oft turning his veil'd eye
Down sidelong aisles, and into niches old.
And when, more near against the marble cold
He had touch'd his forehead, he began to thread
All courts and passages, where silence dead
Rous'd by his whispering footsteps murmured faint:
And long he travers'd to and fro, to acquaint
Himself with every mystery, and awe;

Till, weary, he sat down before the maw
Of a wide outlet, fathomless and dim,
To wild uncertainty and shadows grim.
There, when new wonders ceas'd to float before,
And thoughts of self came on, how crude and sore
The journey homeward to habitual self!
A mad-pursuing of the fog-born elf,
Whose flitting lantern, through rude nettle-briar,
Cheats us into a swamp, into a fire,
Into the bosom of a hated thing.

What misery most drowningly doth sing
In lone Endymion's ear, now he has raught
The goal of consciousness? Ah, 'tis the thought,
The deadly feel of solitude: for lo!
He cannot see the heavens, nor the flow
Of rivers, nor hill-flowers running wild
In pink and purple chequer, nor, up-pil'd,
The cloudy rack slow journeying in the west,
Like herded elephants; nor felt, nor prest
Cool grass, nor tasted the fresh slumberous air;
But far from such companionship to wear
An unknown time, surcharg'd with grief, away,
Was now his lot. And must he patient stay,
Tracing fantastic figures with his spear?
'No!' exclaim'd he, 'why should I tarry here?'
No! loudly echoed times innumerable.
At which he straightway started, and 'gan tell
His paces back into the temple's chief;
Warming and glowing strong in the belief
Of help from Dian: so that when again
He caught her airy form, thus did he plain,
Moving more near the while: 'O Haunter chaste
Of river sides, and woods, and heathy waste,
Where with thy silver bow and arrows keen
Art thou now forested? O woodland Queen,
What smoothest air thy smoother forehead woos?
Where dost thou listen to the wide halloos
Of thy departed nymphs? Through what dark tree
Glimmers thy crescent? Wheresoe'er it be,
'Tis in the breath of heaven: thou dost taste
Freedom as none can taste it, nor dost waste

Thy loveliness in dismal elements;
But, finding in our green earth sweet contents,
There livest blissfully. Ah, if to thee
It feels Elysian, how rich to me,
An exil'd mortal, sounds its pleasant name!
Within my breast there lives a choking flame—
O let me cool 't the zephyr-boughs among!
A homeward fever parches up my tongue—
O let me slake it at the running springs!
Upon my ear a noisy nothing rings—
O let me once more hear the linnet's note!
Before mine eyes thick films and shadows float—
O let me 'noint them with the heaven's light!
Dost thou now lave thy feet and ankles white?
O think how sweet to me the freshening sluice!
Dost thou now please thy thirst with berry-juice?
O think how this dry palate would rejoice!
If in soft slumber thou dost hear my voice,
O think how I should love a bed of flowers!—
Young goddess! let me see my native bowers!
Deliver me from this rapacious deep!

Thus ending loudly, as he would o'erleap
His destiny, alert he stood: but when
Obstinate silence came heavily again,
Feeling about for its old couch of space
And airy cradle, lowly bow'd his face
Desponding, o'er the marble floor's cold thrill.
But 'twas not long; for, sweeter than the rill
To its old channel, or a swollen tide
To margin shallows, were the leaves he spied,
And flowers, and wreaths, and ready myrtle crowns
Up heaping through the slab: refreshment drowns
Itself, and strives its own delights to hide—
Nor in one spot alone; the floral pride
In a long whispering birth enchanted grew
Before his footsteps; as when heav'd anew
Old ocean rolls a lengthened wave to the shore,
Down whose green back the short-liv'd foam, all hoar,
Bursts gradual, with a wayward indolence.

Increasing still in heart and pleasant sense,
Upon his fairy journey on he hastes;
So anxious for the end, he scarcely wastes
One moment with his hand among the sweets:
Onward he goes—he stops—his bosom beats
As plainly in his ear, as the faint charm
Of which the throbs were born. This still alarm,
This sleepy music, forc'd him walk tiptoe:
For it came more softly than the east could blow
Arion's magic to the Atlantic isles;
Or than the west, made jealous by the smiles
Of thron'd Apollo, could breathe back the lyre
To seas Ionian and Tyrian.

O did he ever live, that lonely man,
Who lov'd—and music slew not? 'Tis the pest
Of love, that fairest joys give most unrest;
That things of delicate and tenderest worth
Are swallow'd all, and made a seared dearth,
By one consuming flame: it doth immerse
And suffocate true blessings in a curse.
Half-happy, by comparison of bliss,
Is miserable. 'Twas even so with this
Dew-dropping melody, in the Carian's ear;
First heaven, then hell, and then forgotten clear,
Vanish'd in elemental passion.

And down some swart abysm he had gone,
Had not a heavenly guide benignant led
To where thick myrtle branches, 'gainst his head
Brushing, awakened: then the sounds again
Went noiseless as a passing noontide rain
Over a bower, where little space he stood;
For as the sunset peeps into a wood
So saw he panting light, and towards it went
Through winding alleys; and lo, wonderment!
Upon soft verdure saw, one here, one there,
Cupids a slumbering on their pinions fair.

After a thousand mazes overgone,
At last, with sudden step, he came upon
A chamber, myrtle wall'd, embowered high,

Full of light, incense, tender minstrelsy,
And more of beautiful and strange beside:
For on a silken couch of rosy pride,
In midst of all, there lay a sleeping youth
Of fondest beauty; fonder, in fair sooth,
Than sighs could fathom, or contentment reach:
And coverlids gold-tinted like the peach,
Or ripe October's faded marigolds,
Fell sleek about him in a thousand folds—
Not hiding up an Apollonian curve
Of neck and shoulder, nor the tenting swerve
Of knee from knee, nor ankles pointing light;
But rather, giving them to the filled sight
Officiously. Sideway his face repos'd
On one white arm, and tenderly unclos'd,
By tenderest pressure, a faint damask mouth
To slumbery pout; just as the morning south
Disparts a dew-lipp'd rose. Above his head,
Four lily stalks did their white honours wed
To make a coronal; and round him grew
All tendrils green, of every bloom and hue,
Together intertwin'd and trammel'd fresh:
The vine of glossy sprout; the ivy mesh,
Shading its Ethiop berries; and woodbine,
Of velvet leaves and bugle-blooms divine;
Convolvulus in streaked vases flush;
The creeper, mellowing for an autumn blush;
And virgin's bower, trailing airily;
With others of the sisterhood. Hard by,
Stood serene Cupids watching silently.
One, kneeling to a lyre, touch'd the strings,
Muffling to death the pathos with his wings;
And, ever and anon, uprose to look
At the youth's slumber; while another took
A willow-bough, distilling odorous dew,
And shook it on his hair; another flew
In through the woven roof, and fluttering-wise
Rain'd violets upon his sleeping eyes.

At these enchantments, and yet many more,
The breathless Latmian wonder'd o'er and o'er;
Until, impatient in embarrassment,

He forthright pass'd, and lightly treading went
To that same feather'd lyrist, who straightway,
Smiling, thus whisper'd: 'Though from upper day
Thou art a wanderer, and thy presence here
Might seem unholy, be of happy cheer!
For 'tis the nicest touch of human honour,
When some ethereal and high-favouring donor
Presents immortal bowers to mortal sense;
As now 'tis done to thee, Endymion. Hence
Was I in no wise startled. So recline
Upon these living flowers. Here is wine,
Alive with sparkles—never, I aver,
Since Ariadne was a vintager,
So cool a purple: taste these juicy pears,
Sent me by sad Vertumnus, when his fears
Were high about Pomona: here is cream,
Deepening to richness from a snowy gleam;
Sweeter than that nurse Amalthea skimm'd
For the boy Jupiter: and here, undimm'd
By any touch, a bunch of blooming plums
Ready to melt between an infant's gums:
And here is manna pick'd from Syrian trees,
In starlight, by the three Hesperides.
Feast on, and meanwhile I will let thee know
Of all these things around us.' He did so,
Still brooding o'er the cadence of his lyre;
And thus: 'I need not any hearing tire
By telling how the sea-born goddess pin'd
For a mortal youth, and how she strove to bind
Him all in all unto her doting self.
Who would not be so prison'd? but, fond elf,
He was content to let her amorous plea
Faint through his careless arms; content to see
An unseiz'd heaven dying at his feet;
Content, O fool! to make a cold retreat,
When on the pleasant grass such love, lovelorn,
Lay sorrowing; when every tear was born
Of diverse passion; when her lips and eyes
Were clos'd in sullen moisture, and quick sighs
Came vex'd and pettish through her nostrils small.
Hush! no exclaim—yet, justly mightst thou call
Curses upon his head.—I was half glad,

But my poor mistress went distract and mad,
When the boar tusk'd him: so away she flew
To Jove's high throne, and by her plainings drew
Immortal tear-drops down the thunderer's beard;
Whereon, it was decreed he should be rear'd
Each summer time to life. Lo! this is he,
That same Adonis, safe in the privacy
Of this still region all his winter-sleep.
Aye, sleep; for when our love-sick queen did weep
Over his waned corse, the tremulous shower
Heal'd up the wound, and, with a balmy power,
Medicined death to a lengthened drowsiness:
The which she fills with visions, and doth dress
In all this quiet luxury; and hath set
Us young immortals, without any let,
To watch his slumber through. 'Tis well nigh pass'd.
Even to a moment's filling up, and fast
She scuds with summer breezes, to pant through
The first long kiss, warm firstling, to renew
Embower'd sports in Cytherea's isle.
Look! how those winged listeners all this while
Stand anxious: see! behold!—This clamant word
Broke through the careful silence; for they heard
A rustling noise of leaves, and out there flutter'd
Pigeons and doves: Adonis something mutter'd,
The while one hand, that erst upon his thigh
Lay dormant, mov'd convuls'd and gradually
Up to his forehead. Then there was a hum
Of sudden voices, echoing, 'Come! come!
Arise! awake! Clear summer has forth walk'd
Unto the clover-sward, and she has talk'd
Full soothingly to every nested finch:
Rise, Cupids! or we'll give the blue-bell pinch
To your dimpled arms. Once more sweet life begin!
At this, from every side they hurried in,
Rubbing their sleepy eyes with lazy wrists,
And doubling over head their little fists
In backward yawns. But all were soon alive:
For as delicious wine doth, sparkling, dive
In nectar'd clouds and curls through water fair,
So from the arbour roof down swell'd an air
Odorous and enlivening; making all

To laugh, and play, and sing, and loudly call
For their sweet queen: when lo! the wreathed green
Disparted, and far upward could be seen
Blue heaven, and a silver car, air-borne,
Whose silent wheels, fresh wet from clouds of morn,
Spun off a drizzling dew,—which falling chill
On soft Adonis' shoulders, made him still
Nestle and turn uneasily about.
Soon were the white doves plain, with neck stretch'd out,
And silken traces lighten'd in descent;
And soon, returning from love's banishment,
Queen Venus leaning downward open-arm'd:
Her shadow fell upon his breast, and charm'd
A tumult to his heart, and a new life
Into his eyes. Ah, miserable strife,
But for her comforting! unhappy sight,
But meeting her blue orbs! Who, who can write
Of these first minutes? The unchariest muse
To embracements warm as theirs makes coy excuse.

O it has ruffled every spirit there,
Saving love's self, who stands superb to share
The general gladness: awfully he stands;
A sovereign quell is in his waving hands;
No sight can bear the lightning of his bow;
His quiver is mysterious, none can know
What themselves think of it; from forth his eyes
There darts strange light of varied hues and dyes:
A scowl is sometimes on his brow, but who
Look full upon it feel anon the blue
Of his fair eyes run liquid through their souls.
Endymion feels it, and no more controls
The burning prayer within him; so, bent low,
He had begun a plaining of his woe.
But Venus, bending forward, said: 'My child,
Favour this gentle youth; his days are wild
With love—he—but alas! too well I see
Thou know'st the deepness of his misery.
Ah, smile not so, my son: I tell thee true,
That when through heavy hours I us'd to rue
The endless sleep of this new-born Adon',
This stranger ay I pitied. For upon

A dreary morning once I fled away
Into the breezy clouds, to weep and pray
For this my love: for vexing Mars had teas'd
Me even to tears: thence, when a little eas'd,
Down-looking, vacant, through a hazy wood,
I saw this youth as he despairing stood:
Those same dark curls blown vagrant in the wind;
Those same full fringed lids a constant blind
Over his sullen eyes: I saw him throw
Himself on wither'd leaves, even as though
Death had come sudden; for no jot he mov'd,
Yet mutter'd wildly. I could hear he lov'd
Some fair immortal, and that his embrace
Had zon'd her through the night. There is no trace
Of this in heaven: I have mark'd each cheek,
And find it is the vainest thing to seek;
And that of all things 'tis kept secretest.
Endymion! one day thou wilt be blest:
So still obey the guiding hand that fends
Thee safely through these wonders for sweet ends.
'Tis a concealment needful in extreme;
And if I guess'd not so, the sunny beam
Thou shouldst mount up to with me. Now adieu!
Here must we leave thee.'—At these words up flew
The impatient doves, up rose the floating car,
Up went the hum celestial. High afar
The Latmian saw them minish into nought;
And, when all were clear vanish'd, still he caught
A vivid lightning from that dreadful bow.
When all was darkened, with Etnean throe
The earth clos'd—gave a solitary moan—
And left him once again in twilight lone.

He did not rave, he did not stare aghast,
For all those visions were o'ergone, and past,
And he in loneliness: he felt assur'd
Of happy times, when all he had endur'd
Would seem a feather to the mighty prize.
So, with unusual gladness, on he hies
Through caves, and palaces of mottled ore,
Gold dome, and crystal wall, and turquois floor,
Black polish'd porticos of awful shade,

And, at the last, a diamond balustrade,
Leading afar past wild magnificence,
Spiral through ruggedest loopholes, and thence
Stretching across a void, then guiding o'er
Enormous chasms, where, all foam and roar,
Streams subterranean tease their granite beds;
Then heighten'd just above the silvery heads
Of a thousand fountains, so that he could dash
The waters with his spear; but at the splash,
Done heedlessly, those spouting columns rose
Sudden a poplar's height, and 'gan to enclose
His diamond path with fretwork, streaming round
Alive, and dazzling cool, and with a sound,
Haply, like dolphin tumults, when sweet shells
Welcome the float of Thetis. Long he dwells
On this delight; for, every minute's space,
The streams with changed magic interlace:
Sometimes like delicatest lattices,
Cover'd with crystal vines; then weeping trees,
Moving about as in a gentle wind,
Which, in a wink, to watery gauze refin'd,
Pour'd into shapes of curtain'd canopies,
Spangled, and rich with liquid broideries
Of flowers, peacocks, swans, and naiads fair.
Swifter than lightning went these wonders rare;
And then the water, into stubborn streams
Collecting, mimick'd the wrought oaken beams,
Pillars, and frieze, and high fantastic roof,
Of those dusk places in times far aloof
Cathedrals call'd. He bade a loth farewell
To these founts Protean, passing gulph, and dell,
And torrent, and ten thousand jutting shapes,
Half seen through deepest gloom, and griesly gapes,
Blackening on every side, and overhead
A vaulted dome like Heaven's, far bespread
With starlight gems: aye, all so huge and strange,
The solitary felt a hurried change
Working within him into something dreary,—
Vex'd like a morning eagle, lost, and weary,
And purblind amid foggy, midnight wolds.
But he revives at once: for who beholds
New sudden things, nor casts his mental slough?

Forth from a rugged arch, in the dusk below,
Came mother Cybele! alone—alone—
In sombre chariot; dark foldings thrown
About her majesty, and front death-pale,
With turrets crown'd. Four maned lions hale
The sluggish wheels; solemn their toothed maws,
Their surly eyes brow-hidden, heavy paws
Uplifted drowsily, and nervy tails
Cowering their tawny brushes. Silent sails
This shadowy queen athwart, and faints away
In another gloomy arch.

Wherefore delay,
Young traveller, in such a mournful place?
Art thou wayworn, or canst not further trace
The diamond path? And does it indeed end
Abrupt in middle air? Yet earthward bend
Thy forehead, and to Jupiter cloud-borne
Call ardently! He was indeed wayworn;
Abrupt, in middle air, his way was lost;
To cloud-borne Jove he bowed, and there crost
Towards him a large eagle, 'twixt whose wings,
Without one impious word, himself he flings,
Committed to the darkness and the gloom:
Down, down, uncertain to what pleasant doom,
Swift as a fathoming plummet down he fell
Through unknown things; till exhal'd asphodel,
And rose, with spicy fannings interbreath'd,
Came swelling forth where little caves were wreath'd
So thick with leaves and mosses, that they seem'd
Large honey-combs of green, and freshly teem'd
With airs delicious. In the greenest nook
The eagle landed him, and farewell took.

It was a jasmine bower, all bestrown
With golden moss. His every sense had grown
Ethereal for pleasure; 'bove his head
Flew a delight half-graspable; his tread
Was Hesperian; to his capable ears
Silence was music from the holy spheres;
A dewy luxury was in his eyes;
The little flowers felt his pleasant sighs

And stirr'd them faintly. Verdant cave and cell
He wander'd through, oft wondering at such swell
Of sudden exaltation: but, 'Alas!'
Said he, 'will all this gush of feeling pass
Away in solitude? And must they wane,
Like melodies upon a sandy plain,
Without an echo? Then shall I be left
So sad, so melancholy, so bereft!
Yet still I feel immortal! O my love,
My breath of life, where art thou? High above,
Dancing before the morning gates of heaven?
Or keeping watch among those starry seven,
Old Atlas' children? Art a maid of the waters,
One of shell-winding Triton's bright-hair'd daughters?
Or art, impossible! a nymph of Dian's,
Weaving a coronal of tender scions
For very idleness? Where'er thou art,
Me thinks it now is at my will to start
Into thine arms; to scare Aurora's train,
And snatch thee from the morning; o'er the main
To scud like a wild bird, and take thee off
From thy sea-foamy cradle; or to doff
Thy shepherd vest, and woo thee mid fresh leaves.
No, no, too eagerly my soul deceives
Its powerless self: I know this cannot be.
O let me then by some sweet dreaming flee
To her entrancements: hither sleep awhile!
Hither most gentle sleep! and soothing foil
For some few hours the coming solitude.'

Thus spake he, and that moment felt endu'd
With power to dream deliciously; so wound
Through a dim passage, searching till he found
The smoothest mossy bed and deepest, where
He threw himself, and just into the air
Stretching his indolent arms, he took, O bliss!
A naked waist: 'Fair Cupid, whence is this?'
A well-known voice sigh'd, 'Sweetest, here am I!'
At which soft ravishment, with doting cry
They trembled to each other.—Helicon!
O fountain'd hill! Old Homer's Helicon!
That thou wouldst spout a little streamlet o'er

These sorry pages; then the verse would soar
And sing above this gentle pair, like lark
Over his nested young: but all is dark
Around thine aged top, and thy clear fount
Exhales in mists to heaven. Aye, the count
Of mighty Poets is made up; the scroll
Is folded by the Muses; the bright roll
Is in Apollo's hand: our dazed eyes
Have seen a new tinge in the western skies:
The world has done its duty. Yet, oh yet,
Although the sun of poesy is set,
These lovers did embrace, and we must weep
That there is no old power left to steep
A quill immortal in their joyous tears.
Long time in silence did their anxious fears
Question that thus it was; long time they lay
Fondling and kissing every doubt away;
Long time ere soft caressing sobs began
To mellow into words, and then there ran
Two bubbling springs of talk from their sweet lips.
'O known Unknown! from whom my being sips
Such darling essence, wherefore may I not
Be ever in these arms? in this sweet spot
Pillow my chin for ever? ever press
These toying hands and kiss their smooth excess?
Why not for ever and for ever feel
That breath about my eyes? Ah, thou wilt steal
Away from me again, indeed, indeed—
Thou wilt be gone away, and wilt not heed
My lonely madness. Speak, my kindest fair!
Is—is it to be so? No! Who will dare
To pluck thee from me? And, of thine own will,
Full well I feel thou wouldst not leave me. Still
Let me entwine thee surer, surer—now
How can we part? Elysium! who art thou?
Who, that thou canst not be for ever here,
Or lift me with thee to some starry sphere?
Enchantress! tell me by this soft embrace,
By the most soft completion of thy face,
Those lips, O slippery blisses, twinkling eyes,
And by these tenderest, milky sovereignties—
These tenderest, and by the nectar-wine,

The passion'———'O dov'd Ida the divine!
Endymion! dearest! Ah, unhappy me!
His soul will 'scape us—O felicity!
How he does love me! His poor temples beat
To the very tune of love—how sweet, sweet, sweet.
Revive, dear youth, or I shall faint and die;
Revive, or these soft hours will hurry by
In tranced dulness; speak, and let that spell
Affright this lethargy! I cannot quell
Its heavy pressure, and will press at least
My lips to thine, that they may richly feast
Until we taste the life of love again.
What! dost thou move? dost kiss? O bliss! O pain!
I love thee, youth, more than I can conceive;
And so long absence from thee doth bereave
My soul of any rest; yet must I hence:
Yet, can I not to starry eminence
Uplift thee; nor for very shame can own
Myself to thee: Ah, dearest, do not groan
Or thou wilt force me from this secrecy,
And I must blush in heaven. O that I
Had done it already; that the dreadful smiles
At my lost brightness, my impassion'd wiles,
Had waned from Olympus' solemn height,
And from all serious Gods; that our delight
Was quite forgotten, save of us alone!
And wherefore so ashamed? 'Tis but to atone
For endless pleasure, by some coward blushes:
Yet must I be a coward!—Horror rushes
Too palpable before me—the sad look
Of Jove—Minerva's start—no bosom shook
With awe of purity—no Cupid pinion
In reverence veiled—my crystaline dominion
Half lost, and all old hymns made nullity!
But what is this to love? O I could fly
With thee into the ken of heavenly powers,
So thou wouldst thus, for many sequent hours.
Press me so sweetly. Now I swear at once
That I am wise, that Pallas is a dunce—
Perhaps her love like mine is but unknown—
O I do think that I have been alone
In chastity: yes, Pallas has been sighing,

While every eve saw me my hair-uptying
With fingers cool as aspen leaves. Sweet love,
I was as vague as solitary dove,
Nor knew that nests were built. Now a soft kiss—
Aye, by that kiss, I vow an endless bliss,
An immortality of passion's thine:
Ere long I will exalt thee to the shine
Of heaven ambrosial; and we will shade
Ourselves whole summers by a river glade;
And I will tell thee stories of the sky,
And breathe thee whispers of its minstrelsy.
My happy love will overwing all bounds!
O let me melt into thee; let the sounds
Of our close voices marry at their birth;
Let us entwine hoveringly—O dearth
Of human words! roughness of mortal speech!
Lispings empyrean will I sometime teach
Thine honied tongue—lute-breathings, which I gasp
To have thee understand, now while I clasp
Thee thus, and weep for fondness—I am pain'd,
Endymion: woe! woe! is grief contain'd
In the very deeps of pleasure, my sole life?'—
Hereat, with many sobs, her gentle strife
Melted into a languor. He return'd
Entranced vows and tears.

Ye who have yearn'd
With too much passion, will here stay and pity,
For the mere sake of truth; as 'tis a ditty
Not of these days, but long ago 'twas told
By a cavern wind unto a forest old;
And then the forest told it in a dream
To a sleeping lake, whose cool and level gleam
A poet caught as he was journeying
To Phoebus' shrine; and in it he did fling
His weary limbs, bathing an hour's space,
And after, straight in that inspir'd place
He sang the story up into the air,
Giving it universal freedom. There
Has it been ever sounding for those ears
Whose tips are glowing hot. The legend cheers
Yon centinel stars; and he who listens to it

Must surely be self-doomed or he will rue it:
For quenchless burnings come upon the heart,
Made fiercer by a fear lest any part
Should be engulfed in the eddying wind.
As much as here is penn'd doth always find
A resting place, thus much comes clear and plain;
Anon the strange voice is upon the wane—
And 'tis but echo'd from departing sound,
That the fair visitant at last unwound
Her gentle limbs, and left the youth asleep.—
Thus the tradition of the gusty deep.

Now turn we to our former chroniclers.—
Endymion awoke, that grief of hers
Sweet paining on his ear: he sickly guess'd
How lone he was once more, and sadly press'd
His empty arms together, hung his head,
And most forlorn upon that widow'd bed
Sat silently. Love's madness he had known:
Often with more than tortured lion's groan
Moanings had burst from him; but now that rage
Had pass'd away: no longer did he wage
A rough-voic'd war against the dooming stars.
No, he had felt too much for such harsh jars:
The lyre of his soul Eolian tun'd
Forgot all violence, and but commun'd
With melancholy thought: O he had swoon'd
Drunken from pleasure's nipple; and his love
Henceforth was dove-like.—Loth was he to move
From the imprinted couch, and when he did,
'Twas with slow, languid paces, and face hid
In muffling hands. So temper'd, out he stray'd
Half seeing visions that might have dismay'd
Alecto's serpents; ravishments more keen
Than Hermes' pipe, when anxious he did lean
Over eclipsing eyes: and at the last
It was a sounding grotto, vaulted, vast,
O'er studded with a thousand, thousand pearls,
And crimson mouthed shells with stubborn curls,
Of every shape and size, even to the bulk
In which whales harbour close, to brood and sulk
Against an endless storm. Moreover too,

Fish-semblances, of green and azure hue.
Ready to snort their streams. In this cool wonder
Endymion sat down, and 'gan to ponder
On all his life: his youth, up to the day
When 'mid acclaim, and feasts, and garlands gay,
He stept upon his shepherd throne: the look
Of his white palace in wild forest nook,
And all the revels he had lorded there:
Each tender maiden whom he once thought fair,
With every friend and fellow-woodlander—
Pass'd like a dream before him. Then the spur
Of the old bards to mighty deeds: his plans
To nurse the golden age mong shepherd clans:
That wondrous night: the great Pan-festival:
His sister's sorrow; and his wanderings all,
Until into the earth's deep maw he rush'd:
Then all its buried magic, till it flush'd
High with excessive love. 'And now,' thought he,
'How long must I remain in jeopardy
Of blank amazements that amaze no more?
Now I have tasted her sweet soul to the core
All other depths are shallow: essences,
Once spiritual, are like muddy lees,
Meant but to fertilize my earthly root,
And make my branches lift a golden fruit
Into the bloom of heaven: other light,
Though it be quick and sharp enough to blight
The Olympian eagle's vision, is dark,
Dark as the parentage of chaos. Hark!
My silent thoughts are echoing from these shells;
Or they are but the ghosts, the dying swells
Of noises far away?—list!'—Hereupon
He kept an anxious ear. The humming tone
Came louder, and behold, there as he lay,
On either side outgush'd, with misty spray,
A copious spring; and both together dash'd
Swift, mad, fantastic round the rocks, and lash'd
Among the conchs and shells of the lofty grot,
Leaving a trickling dew. At last they shot
Down from the ceiling's height, pouring a noise
As of some breathless racers whose hopes poize
Upon the last few steps, and with spent force

Along the ground they took a winding course.
Endymion follow'd—for it seem'd that one
Ever pursu'd, the other strove to shun—
Follow'd their languid mazes, till well nigh
He had left thinking of the mystery,—
And was now rapt in tender hoverings
Over the vanish'd bliss. Ah! what is it sings
His dream away? What melodies are these?
They sound as through the whispering of trees,
Not native in such barren vaults. Give ear!

'O Arethusa, peerless nymph! why fear
Such tenderness as mine? Great Dian, why,
Why didst thou hear her prayer? O that I
Were rippling round her dainty fairness now,
Circling about her waist, and striving how
To entice her to a dive! then stealing in
Between her luscious lips and eyelids thin.
O that her shining hair was in the sun,
And I distilling from it thence to run
In amorous rilllets down her shrinking form!
To linger on her lily shoulders, warm
Between her kissing breasts, and every charm
Touch raptur'd!—See how painfully I flow:
Fair maid, be pitiful to my great woe.
Stay, stay thy weary course, and let me lead,
A happy wooer, to the flowery mead
Where all that beauty snar'd me.'—'Cruel god,
Desist! or my offended mistress' nod
Will stagnate all thy fountains:—tease me not
With syren words—Ah, have I really got
Such power to madden thee? And is it true—
Away, away, or I shall dearly rue
My very thoughts: in mercy then away,
Kindest Alpheus, for should I obey
My own dear will, 'twould be a deadly bane.
O, Oread-Queen! would that thou hadst a pain
Like this of mine, then would I fearless turn
And be a criminal. Alas, I burn,
I shudder—gentle river, get thee hence.
Alpheus! thou enchanter! every sense
Of mine was once made perfect in these woods.

Fresh breezes, bowery lawns, and innocent floods,
Ripe fruits, and lonely couch, contentment gave;
But ever since I heedlessly did lave
In thy deceitful stream, a panting glow
Grew strong within me: wherefore serve me so,
And call it love? Alas, 'twas cruelty.
Not once more did I close my happy eye
Amid the thrush's song. Away! Avaunt!
O 'twas a cruel thing.'—'Now thou dost taunt
So softly, Arethusa, that I think
If thou wast playing on my shady brink,
Thou wouldst bathe once again. Innocent maid!
Stifle thine heart no more; nor be afraid
Of angry powers: there are deities
Will shade us with their wings. Those fitful sighs
'Tis almost death to hear: O let me pour
A dewy balm upon them!—fear no more,
Sweet Arethusa! Dian's self must feel
Sometime these very pangs. Dear maiden, steal
Blushing into my soul, and let us fly
These dreary caverns for the open sky.
I will delight thee all my winding course,
From the green sea up to my hidden source
About Arcadian forests; and will shew
The channels where my coolest waters flow
Through mossy rocks; where, 'mid exuberant green,
I roam in pleasant darkness, more unseen
Than Saturn in his exile; where I brim
Round flowery islands, and take thence a skim
Of mealy sweets, which myriads of bees
Buzz from their honied wings: and thou shouldst please
Thyself to choose the richest, where we might
Be incense-pillow'd every summer night.
Doff all sad fears, thou white deliciousness,
And let us be thus comforted; unless
Thou couldst rejoice to see my hopeless stream
Hurry distracted from Sol's temperate beam,
And pour to death along some hungry sands.'—
'What can I do, Alpheus? Dian stands
Severe before me: persecuting fate!
Unhappy Arethusa! thou wast late
A huntress free in'—At this, sudden fell

Those two sad streams adown a fearful dell.
 The Latmian listen'd, but he heard no more,
 Save echo, faint repeating o'er and o'er
 The name of Arethusa. On the verge
 Of that dark gulph he wept, and said: 'I urge
 Thee, gentle Goddess of my pilgrimage,
 By our eternal hopes, to soothe, to assuage,
 If thou art powerful, these lovers' pains;
 And make them happy in some happy plains.

He turn'd—there was a whelming sound—he stept
 There was a cooler light; and so he kept
 Towards it by a sandy path, and lo!
 More suddenly than doth a moment go,
 The visions of the earth were gone and fled—
 He saw the giant sea above his head.

BOOK THREE

THERE are who lord it o'er their fellow-men
 With most prevailing tinsel: who unpen
 Their baaing vanities, to browse away
 The comfortable green and juicy hay
 From human pastures; or, O torturing fact!
 Who, through an idiot blink, will see unpack'd
 Fire-branded foxes to sear up and singe
 Our gold and ripe-ear'd hopes. With not one tinge
 Of sanctuary splendour, not a sight
 Able to face an owl's, they still are dight
 By the blear-eyed nations in empurpled vests,
 And crowns, and turbans. With unladen breasts,
 Save of blown self-applause, they proudly mount
 To their spirit's perch, their being's high account,
 Their tiptop nothings, their dull skies, their thrones—
 Amid the fierce intoxicating tones
 Of trumpets, shoutings, and belabour'd drums,
 And sudden cannon. Ah! how all this hums,
 In wakeful ears, like uproar past and gone—
 Like thunder clouds that spake to Babylon,
 And set those old Chaldeans to their tasks.—
 Are then regalities all gilded masks?
 No, there are throned seats unscalable

But by a patient wing, a constant spell,
Or by ethereal things that, unconfin'd,
Can make a ladder of the eternal wind,
And poise about in cloudy thunder-tents
To watch the abysm-birth of elements.
Aye, 'bove the withering of old-lipp'd Fate
A thousand Powers keep religious state,
In water, fiery realm, and airy bourne;
And, silent as a consecrated urn,
Hold sphery sessions for a season due.
Yet few of these far majesties, ah, few!
Have bared their operations to this globe—
Few, who with gorgeous pageantry enrobe
Our piece of heaven—whose benevolence
Shakes hand with our own Ceres; every sense
Filling with spiritual sweets to plenitude,
As bees gorge full their cells. And, by the feud
'Twixt Nothing and Creation, I here swear,
Eterne Apollo! that thy Sister fair
Is of all these the gentlier-mightiest.
When thy gold breath is misting in the west,
She unobserved steals unto her throne,
And there she sits most meek and most alone;
As if she had not pomp subservient;
As if thine eye, high Poet! was not bent
Towards her with the Muses in thine heart;
As if the ministring stars kept not apart,
Waiting for silver-footed messages.
O Moon! the oldest shades 'mong oldest trees
Feel palpitations when thou lookest in:
O Moon! old boughs lisp forth a holier din
The while they feel thine airy fellowship.
Thou dost bless every where, with silver lip
Kissing dead things to life. The sleeping kine,
Couched in thy brightness, dream of fields divine:
Innumerable mountains rise, and rise,
Ambitious for the hallowing of thine eyes;
And yet thy benediction passeth not
One obscure hiding-place, one little spot
Where pleasure may be sent: the nested wren
Has thy fair face within its tranquil ken,
And from beneath a sheltering ivy leaf

Takes glimpses of thee; thou art a relief
To the poor patient oyster, where it sleeps
Within its pearly house.—The mighty deeps,
The monstrous sea is thine—the myriad sea!
O Moon! far-spooning Ocean bows to thee,
And Tellus feels his forehead's cumbrous load.

Cynthia! where art thou now? What far abode
Of green or silvery bower doth enshrine
Such utmost beauty? Alas, thou dost pine
For one as sorrowful: thy cheek is pale
For one whose cheek is pale: thou dost bewail
His tears, who weeps for thee. Where dost thou sigh?
Ah! surely that light peeps from Vesper's eye,
Or what a thing is love! 'Tis She, but lo!
How chang'd, how full of ache, how gone in woe!
She dies at the thinnest cloud; her loveliness
Is wan on Neptune's blue: yet there's a stress
Of love-spangles, just off yon cape of trees,
Dancing upon the waves, as if to please
The curly foam with amorous influence.
O, not so idle: for down-glancing thence
She fathoms eddies, and runs wild about
O'erwhelming water-courses; scaring out
The thorny sharks from hiding-holes, and fright'ning
Their savage eyes with unaccustom'd lightning.
Where will the splendour be content to reach?
O love! how potent hast thou been to teach
Strange journeyings! Wherever duty dwells,
In gulph or aerie, mountains or deep dells,
In light, in gloom, in star or blazing sun,
Thou pointest out the way, and straight 'tis won
Amid his toil thou gav'st Leander breath;
Thou leddest Orpheus through the gleams of death;
Thou madest Pluto bear thin element;
And now, O winged Chieftain! thou hast sent
A moon-beam to the deep, deep water-world,
To find Endymion.

On gold sand impearl'd
With lily shells, and pebbles milky white,
Poor Cynthia greeted him, and sooth'd her light

The mattock totter'd in his hand;
So vain was his endeavour
That at the root of the old tree
He might have worked for ever.

'You're overtasked, good Simon Lee,
Give me your tool' to him I said;
And at the word right gladly he
Received my proffer'd aid.
I struck, and with a single blow
The tangled root I sever'd,
At which the poor old man so long
And vainly had endeavour'd.

The tears into his eyes were brought,
And thanks and praises seemed to run
So fast out of his heart, I thought
They never would have done.
—I've heard of hearts unkind, kind deeds
With coldness still returning.
Alas! the gratitude of men
Has oftner left me mourning.

Anecdote for Fathers,

SHEWING HOW THE ART OF LYING MAY BE TAUGHT

I HAVE a boy of five years old,
His face is fair and fresh to see;
His limbs are cast in beauty's mould,
And dearly he loves me.

One morn we stroll'd on our dry walk,
Our quiet house all full in view,
And held such intermitted talk
As we are wont to do.

My thoughts on former pleasures ran;
I thought of Kilve's delightful shore,
My pleasant home, when spring began,
A long, long year before.

A day it was when I could bear
To think, and think, and think again;
With so much happiness to spare,
I could not feel a pain.

My boy was by my side, so slim
And graceful in his rustic dress!
And oftentimes I talked to him,
In very idleness.

The young lambs ran a pretty race;
The morning sun shone bright and warm;
'Kilve,' said I, 'was a pleasant place,
'And so is Liswyn farm.

'My little boy, which like you more,'
I said and took him by the arm—
'Our home by Kilve's delightful shore,
'Or here at Liswyn farm?'

'And tell me, had you rather be,'
I said and held him by the arm,
'At Kilve's smooth shore by the green sea,
'Or here at Liswyn farm?'

In careless mood he looked at me,
While still I held him by the arm,
And said, 'At Kilve I'd rather be
'Than here at Liswyn farm.'

'Now, little Edward, say why so;
My little Edward, tell me why;
'I cannot tell, I do not know.'
'Why this is strange,' said I.

'For, here are woods and green-hills warm;
'There surely must some reason be
'Why you would change sweet Liswyn farm
'For Kilve by the green sea.'

At this, my boy, so fair and slim,
Hung down his head, nor made reply;
And five times did I say to him,
'Why? Edward, tell me why?'

His head he raised—there was in sight,
It caught his eye, he saw it plain—
Upon the house-top, glittering bright,
A broad and gilded vane.

Then did the boy his tongue unlock,
And thus to me he made reply;
'At Kilve there was no weather-cock,
'And that's the reason why.'

Oh dearest, dearest boy! my heart
For better lore would seldom yearn,
Could I but teach the hundredth part
Of what from thee I learn.

We are Seven

A SIMPLE child, dear brother Jim,
That lightly draws its breath,
And feels its life in every limb,
What should it know of death?

I met a little cottage girl,
She was eight years old, she said;
Her hair was thick with many a curl
That cluster'd round her head.

She had a rustic, woodland air,
And she was wildly clad;
Her eyes were fair, and very fair,
—Her beauty made me glad.

'Sisters and brothers, little maid,
'How many may you be?'
'How many? seven in all,' she said,
And wondering looked at me.

'And where are they, I pray you tell?'
She answered, 'Seven are we,
'And two of us at Conway dwell,
'And two are gone to sea.

'Two of us in the church-yard lie,
'My sister and my brother,
'And in the church-yard cottage, I
'Dwell near them with my mother.'

'You say that two at Conway dwell,
'And two are gone to sea,
'Yet you are seven; I pray you tell
'Sweet Maid, how this may be?'

Then did the little Maid reply,
'Seven boys and girls are we;
'Two of us in the church-yard lie,
'Beneath the church-yard tree.'

'You run about, my little maid,
'Your limbs they are alive;
'If two are in the church-yard laid,
'Then ye are only five.'

'Their graves are green, they may be seen,'
The little Maid replied,
'Twelve steps or more from my mother's door,
'And they are side by side.

'My stockings there I often knit,
'My 'kerchief there I hem;
'And there upon the ground I sit—
'I sit and sing to them.

'And often after sunset, Sir,
'When it is light and fair,
'I take my little porringer,
'And eat my supper there.

'The first that died was little Jane;
 'In bed she moaning lay,
 'Till God released her of her pain,
 'And then she went away.

'So in the church-yard she was laid,
 'And all the summer dry,
 'Together round her grave we played,
 'My brother John and I.

'And when the ground was white with snow,
 'And I could run and slide,
 'My brother John was forced to go,
 'And he lies by her side.'

'How many are you then,' said I,
 'If they two are in Heaven?'
 The little Maiden did reply,
 'O Master! we are seven.'

'But they are dead; those two are dead!
 'Their spirits are in heaven!'
 'Twas throwing words away; for still
 The little Maid would have her will,
 And said, 'Nay, we are seven!'

Lines

WRITTEN IN EARLY SPRING

I HEARD a thousand blended notes,
 While in a grove I sate reclined,
 In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
 Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

To her fair works did nature link
 The human soul that through me ran;
 And much it griev'd my heart to think
 What man has made of man.

Through primrose-tufts, in that sweet bower,
The periwinkle trail'd its wreathes;
And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

The birds around me hopp'd and play'd:
Their thoughts I cannot measure,
But the least motion which they made,
It seem'd a thrill of pleasure.

The budding twigs spread out their fan,
To catch the breezy air;
And I must think, do all I can,
That there was pleasure there.

If I these thoughts may not prevent,
If such be of my creed the plan,
Have I not reason to lament
What man has made of man?

The Thorn

I

THERE is a thorn; it looks so old,
In truth you'd find it hard to say,
How it could ever have been young,
It looks so old and grey.
Not higher than a two-years' child
It stands erect this aged thorn;
No leaves it has, no thorny points;
It is a mass of knotted joints,
A wretched thing forlorn.
It stands erect, and like a stone
With lichens it is overgrown.

2

Like rock or stone, it is o'ergrown
With lichens to the very top,
And hung with heavy tufts of moss,
A melancholy crop:

Up from the earth these mosses creep,
And this poor thorn they clasp it round
So close, you'd say that they were bent
With plain and manifest intent,
To drag it to the ground;
And all had joined in one endeavour
To bury this poor thorn for ever.

3

High on a mountain's highest ridge,
Where oft the stormy winter gale
Cuts like a scythe, while through the clouds
It sweeps from vale to vale;
Not five yards from the mountain-path,
This thorn you on your left espy;
And to the left, three yards beyond,
You see a little muddy pond
Of water, never dry;
I've measured it from side to side:
'Tis three feet long, and two feet wide.

4

And close beside this aged thorn,
There is a fresh and lovely sight,
A beauteous heap, a hill of moss,
Just half a foot in height.
All lovely colours there you see,
All colours that were ever seen,
And mossy network too is there,
As if by hand of lady fair
The work had woven been,
And cups, the darlings of the eye,
So deep is their vermilion dye.

5

Ah me! what lovely tints are there!
Of olive-green and scarlet bright,
In spikes, in branches, and in stars,
Green, red, and pearly white.

This heap of earth o'ergrown with moss
Which close beside the thorn you see,
So fresh in all its beauteous dyes,
Is like an infant's grave in size
As like as like can be:
But never, never any where,
An infant's grave was half so fair.

6

Now would you see this aged thorn,
This pond and beauteous hill of moss,
You must take care and chuse your time
The mountain when to cross.
For oft there sits, between the heap
That's like an infant's grave in size,
And that same pond of which I spoke,
A woman in a scarlet cloak,
And to herself she cries,
'Oh misery! oh misery!
'Oh woe is me! oh misery!'

7

At all times of the day and night
This wretched woman thither goes,
And she is known to every star,
And every wind that blows;
And there beside the thorn she sits
When the blue day-light's in the skies,
And when the whirlwind's on the hill,
Or frosty air is keen and still,
And to herself she cries,
'Oh misery! oh misery!
'Oh woe is me! oh misery!'

8

'Now wherefore thus, by day and night,
'In rain, in tempest, and in snow,
'Thus to the dreary mountain-top
'Does this poor woman go?

'And why sits she beside the thorn
'When the blue day-light's in the sky,
'Or when the whirlwind's on the hill,
'Or frosty air is keen and still,
'And wherefore does she cry?—
'Oh wherefore? wherefore? tell me why
'Does she repeat that doleful cry?'

9

I cannot tell; I wish I could;
For the true reason no one knows,
But if you'd gladly view the spot,
The spot to which she goes;
The heap that's like an infant's grave,
The pond—and thorn, so old and grey,
Pass by her door—'tis seldom shut—
And if you see her in her hut,
Then to the spot away!—
I never heard of such as dare
Approach the spot when she is there.

10

'But wherefore to the mountain-top
'Can this unhappy woman go,
'Whatever star is in the skies,
'Whatever wind may blow?'
Nay rack your brain—'tis all in vain,
I'll tell you every thing I know;
But to the thorn, and to the pond
Which is a little step beyond,
I wish that you would go:
Perhaps when you are at the place
You something of her tale may trace.

11

I'll give you the best help I can:
Before you up the mountain go,
Up to the dreary mountain-top,
I'll tell you all I know.

'Tis now some two and twenty years,
Since she (her name is Martha Ray)
Gave with a maiden's true good will
Her company to Stephen Hill;
And she was blithe and gay,
And she was happy, happy still
Whene'er she thought of Stephen Hill.

12

And they had fix'd the wedding-day,
The morning that must wed them both;
But Stephen to another maid
Had sworn another oath;
And with this other maid to church
Unthinking Stephen went—
Poor Martha! on that woeful day
A cruel, cruel fire, they say,
Into her bones was sent:
It dried her body like a cinder,
And almost turn'd her brain to tinder.

13

They say, full six months after this,
While yet the summer-leaves were green,
She to the mountain-top would go,
And there was often seen.
'Tis said, a child was in her womb,
As now to any eye was plain;
She was with child, and she was mad,
Yet often she was sober sad
From her exceeding pain.
Oh me! ten thousand times I'd rather
That he had died, that cruel father!

14

Sad case for such a brain to hold
Communion with a stirring child!
Sad case, as you may think, for one
Who had a brain so wild!

Last Christmas when we talked of this,
Old Farmer Simpson did maintain,
That in her womb the infant wrought
About its mother's heart, and brought
Her senses back again:
And when at last her time drew near,
Her looks were calm, her senses clear.

15

No more I know, I wish I did,
And I would tell it all to you;
For what became of this poor child
There's none that ever knew:
And if a child was born or no,
There's no one that could ever tell;
And if 'twas born alive or dead,
There's no one knows, as I have said,
But some remember well,
That Martha Ray about this time
Would up the mountain often climb.

16

And all that winter, when at night
The wind blew from the mountain-peak,
'Twas worth your while, though in the dark,
The church-yard path to seek:
For many a time and oft were heard
Cries coming from the mountain-head,
Some plainly living voices were,
And others, I've heard many swear,
Were voices of the dead:
I cannot think, whate'er they say,
They had to do with Martha Ray.

17

But that she goes to this old thorn,
The thorn which I've described to you,
And there sits in a scarlet cloak,
I will be sworn is true.

For one day with my telescope,
To view the ocean wide and bright,
When to this country first I came,
Ere I had heard of Martha's name,
I climbed the mountain's height:
A storm came on, and I could see
No object higher than my knee.

18

'Twas mist and rain, and storm and rain,
No screen, no fence could I discover,
And then the wind! in faith, it was
A wind full ten times over.
I looked around, I thought I saw
A jutting crag, and off I ran,
Head-foremost, through the driving rain,
The shelter of the crag to gain,
And, as I am a man,
Instead of jutting crag, I found
A woman seated on the ground.

19

I did not speak—I saw her face,
Her face it was enough for me;
I turned about and heard her cry.
'Oh misery! O misery!'
And there she sits, until the moon
Through half the clear blue sky will go,
And when the little breezes make
The waters of the pond to shake,
As all the country know,
She shudders and you hear her cry,
'Oh misery! oh misery!'

20

'But what's the thorn? and what's the pond?
'And what's the hill of moss to her?
'And what's the creeping breeze that comes
'The little pond to stir?'

I cannot tell; but some will say
She hanged her baby on the tree,
Some say she drowned it in the pond,
Which is a little step beyond,
But all and each agree,
The little babe was buried there,
Beneath that hill of moss so fair.

21

I've heard the scarlet moss is red
With drops of that poor infant's blood;
But kill a new-born infant thus!
I do not think she could.
Some say, if to the pond you go,
And fix on it a steady view,
The shadow of a babe you trace,
A baby and a baby's face,
And that it looks at you;
Whene'er you look on it, 'tis plain
The baby looks at you again.

22

And some had sworn an oath that she
Should be to public justice brought;
And for the little infant's bones
With spades they would have sought.
But then the beauteous hill of moss
Before their eyes began to stir;
And for full fifty yards around,
The grass it shook upon the ground;
But all do still aver
The little babe is buried there,
Beneath that hill of moss so fair.

23

I cannot tell how this may be,
But plain it is, the thorn is bound
With heavy tufts of moss, that strive
To drag it to the ground.

And this I know, full many a time,
When she was on the mountain high,
By day, and in the silent night,
When all the stars shone clear and bright,
That I have heard her cry,
'Oh misery! oh misery!
'O woe is me! oh misery!'

The Last of the Flock

IN distant countries I have been,
And yet I have not often seen
A healthy man, a man full grown,
Weep in the public roads alone.
But such a one, on English ground,
And in the broad high-way, I met;
Along the broad high-way he came,
His cheeks with tears were wet.
Sturdy he seemed, though he was sad;
And in his arms a lamb he had.

He saw me, and he turned aside,
As if he wished himself to hide:
Then with his coat he made essay
To wipe those briny tears away.
I follow'd him, and said, 'My friend
'What ails you? wherefore weep you so?'
—'Shame on me, Sir! this lusty lamb,
He makes my tears to flow.
To-day I fetched him from the rock;
He is the last of all my flock.

When I was young, a single man,
And after youthful follies ran,
Though little given to care and thought,
Yet, so it was, a ewe I bought;
And other sheep from her I raised,
As healthy sheep as you might see,
And then I married, and was rich
As I could wish to be;
Of sheep I number'd a full score,
And every year encreas'd my store.

Year after year my stock it grew,
And from this one, this single ewe,
Full fifty comely sheep I raised,
As sweet a flock as ever grazed!
Upon the mountain did they feed;
They throve, and we at home did thrive.
—This lusty lamb of all my store
Is all that is alive:
And now I care not if we die,
And perish all of poverty.

Ten children, Sir! had I to feed,
Hard labour in a time of need!
My pride was tamed, and in our grief,
I of the parish ask'd relief.
They said I was a wealthy man;
My sheep upon the mountain fed,
And it was fit that thence I took
Whereof to buy us bread:
'Do this; how can we give to you,'
They cried, 'what to the poor is due?'

I sold a sheep as they had said,
And bought my little children bread,
And they were healthy with their food;
For me it never did me good.
A woeful time it was for me,
To see the end of all my gains,
The pretty flock which I have reared
With all my care and pains,
To see it melt like snow away!
For me it was a woeful day.

Another still! and still another!
A little lamb, and then its mother!
It was a vein that never stopp'd,
Like blood-drops from my heart they dropp'd.
Till thirty were not left alive
They dwindled, dwindled, one by one,
And I may say that many a time
I wished they all were gone:
They dwindled one by one away;
For me it was a woeful day.

To wicked deeds I was inclined,
And wicked fancies cross'd my mind,
And every man I chanc'd to see,
I thought he knew some ill of me.
No peace, no comfort could I find,
No ease, within doors or without,
And crazily, and wearily,
I went my work about.
Oft-times I thought to run away;
For me it was a woeful day.

Sir! 'twas a precious flock to me,
As dear as my own children be;
For daily with my growing store
I loved my children more and more
Alas! it was an evil time;
God cursed me in my sore distress,
I prayed, yet every day I thought
I loved my children less;
And every week, and every day,
My flock, it seemed to melt away.

They dwindled, Sir, sad sight to see!
From ten to five, from five to three,
A lamb, a wether, and a ewe;
And then at last, from three to two;
And of my fifty, yesterday
I had but only one,
And here it lies upon my arm,
Alas! and I have none;
To-day I fetched it from the rock;
It is the last of all my flock.'

The Mad Mother

HER eyes are wild, her head is bare,
The sun has burnt her coal-black hair,
Her eye-brows have a rusty stain,
And she came far from over the main.

And bound it round Endymion: then struck
His wand against the empty air times nine.—
'What more there is to do, young man, is thine:
But first a little patience; first undo
This tangled thread, and wind it to a clue.
Ah, gentle! 'tis as weak as spider's skein;
And shouldst thou break it—What, is it done so clean?
A power overshadows thee! O, brave!
The spite of hell is tumbling to its grave.
Here is a shell; 'tis pearly blank to me,
Nor mark'd with any sign or character—
Canst thou read aught? O read for pity's sake!
Olympus! we are safe! Now, Carian, break
This wand against yon lyre on the pedestal.'

'Twas done: and straight with sudden swell and fall
Sweet music breath'd her soul away, and sigh'd
A lullaby to silence.—'Youth! now strew
These minced leaves on me, and passing through
Those files of dead, scatter the same around,
And thou wilt see the issue.'—'Mid the sound
Of flutes and viols, ravishing his heart,
Endymion from Glaucus stood apart,
And scatter'd in his face some fragments light.
How lightning-swift the change! a youthful wight
Smiling beneath a coral diadem,
Out-sparkling sudden like an upturn'd gem,
Appear'd, and, stepping to a beauteous corse,
Kneel'd down beside it, and with tenderest force
Press'd its cold hand, and wept,—and Scylla sigh'd!
Endymion, with quick hand, the charm applied—
The nymph arose: he left them to their joy,
And onward went upon his high employ,
Showering those powerful fragments on the dead.
And, as he pass'd, each lifted up its head.
As doth a flower at Apollo's touch.
Death felt it to his inwards: 'twas too much:
Death fell a weeping in his charnel-house.
The Latmian persever'd along, and thus
All were re-animated. There arose
A noise of harmony, pulses and throes
Of gladness in the air—while many, who

Had died in mutual arms devout and true,
Sprang to each other madly; and the rest
Felt a high certainty of being blest.
They gaz'd upon Endymion. Enchantment
Grew drunken, and would have its head and bent.
Delicious symphonies, like airy flowers,
Budded, and swell'd, and, full-blown, shed full showers
Of light, soft, unseen leaves of sounds divine.
The two deliverers tasted a pure wine
Of happiness, from fairy-press ooz'd out.
Speechless they eyed each other, and about
The fair assembly wander'd to and fro,
Distracted with the richest overflow
Of joy that ever pour'd from heaven.

——'Away!'

Shouted the new born god; 'Follow, and pay
Our piety to Neptunus supreme!—
Then Scylla, blushing sweetly from her dream,
They led on first, bent to her meek surprise,
Through portal columns of a giant size,
Into the vaulted, boundless emerald.
Joyous all follow'd, as the leader call'd,
Down marble steps; pouring as easily
As hour-glass sand,—and fast, as you might see
Swallows obeying the south summer's call,
Or swans upon a gentle waterfall.

Thus went that beautiful multitude, nor far,
Ere from among some rocks of glittering spar,
Just within ken, they saw descending thick
Another multitude. Whereat more quick
Moved either host. On a wide sand they met,
And of those numbers every eye was wet;
For each their old love found. A murmuring rose,
Like what was never heard in all the throes
Of wind and waters: 'tis past human wit
To tell; 'tis dizziness to think of it.

This mighty consummation made, the host
Mov'd on for many a league; and gain'd, and lost
Huge sea-marks; vanward swelling in array,

And from the rear diminishing away,—
Till a faint dawn surpris'd them. Glaucus cried,
'Behold! behold, the palace of his pride!
God Neptune's palaces!' With noise increas'd,
They shoulder'd on towards that brightening east.
At every onward step proud domes arose
In prospect,—diamond gleams, and golden glows
Of amber 'gainst their faces levelling.
Joyous, and many as the leaves in spring,
Still onward; still the splendour gradual swell'd.
Rich opal domes were seen, on high upheld
By jasper pillars, letting through their shafts
A blush of coral. Copious wonder-draughts
Each gazer drank; and deeper drank more near:
For what poor mortals fragment up, as mere
As marble was there lavish, to the vast
Of one fair palace, that far far surpass'd,
Even for common bulk, those olden three,
Memphis, and Babylon, and Nineveh.

As large, as bright, as colour'd as the bow
Of Iris, when unfading it doth show
Beyond a silvery shower, was the arch
Through which this Paphian army took its march,
Into the outer courts of Neptune's state:
Whence could be seen, direct, a golden gate,
To which the leaders sped; but not half raught
Ere it burst open swift as fairy thought,
And made those dazzled thousands veil their eyes
Like callow eagles at the first sunrise.
Soon with an eagle nativeness their gaze
Ripe from hue-golden swoons took all the blaze,
And then, behold! large Neptune on his throne
Of emerald deep: yet not exalt alone;
At his right hand stood winged Love, and on
His left sat smiling Beauty's paragon.

Far as the mariner on highest mast
Can see all round upon the calmed vast,
So wide was Neptune's hall: and as the blue
Doth vault the waters, so the waters drew
Their doming curtains, high, magnificent,

Aw'd from the throne aloof!—and when storm-rent
Disclos'd the thunder-gloomings in Jove's air;
But sooth'd as now, flash'd sudden everywhere,
Noiseless, sub-marine cloudlets, glittering
Death to a human eye: for there did spring
From natural west, and east, and south, and north,
A light as of four sunsets, blazing forth
A gold-green zenith 'bove the Sea-God's head
Of lucid depth the floor, and far outspread
As breezeless lake, on which the slim canoe
Of feather'd Indian darts about, as through
The delicatest air: air verily,
But for the portraiture of clouds and sky:
This palace floor breath-air,—but for the amaze
Of deep-seen wonders motionless,—and blaze
Of the dome pomp, reflected in extremes,
Globing a golden sphere.

They stood in dreams
Till Triton blew his horn. The palace rang;
The Nereids danc'd; the Syrens faintly sang;
And the great Sea-King bow'd his dripping head,
Then Love took wing, and from his pinions shed
On all the multitude a nectarous dew.
The ooze-born Goddess beckoned and drew
Fair Scylla and her guides to conference;
And when they reach'd the throned eminence
She kist the sea-nymph's cheek,—who sat her down
A toying with the doves. Then,—'Mighty crown
And sceptre of this kingdom!' Venus said,
'Thy vows were on a time to Nais paid:
Behold!'—Two copious tear-drops instant fell
From the God's large eyes; he smil'd delectable,
And over Glaucus held his blessing hands.—
'Endymion! Ah! still wandering in the bands
Of love? Now this is cruel. Since the hour
I met thee in earth's bosom, all my power
Have I put forth to serve thee. What, not yet
Escap'd from dull mortality's harsh net?
A little patience, youth! 'twill not be long,
Or I am skilless quite: an idle tongue,
A humid eye, and steps luxurious,

Where these are new and strange, are ominous.
Aye, I have seen these signs in one of heaven,
When others were all blind; and were I given
To utter secrets, haply I might say
Some pleasant words: but Love will have his day.
So wait awhile expectant. Pr'ythee soon,
Even in the passing of thine honey-moon,
Visit thou my Cytherea: thou wilt find
Cupid well-natured, my Adonis kind;
And pray persuade with thee—Ah, I have done,
All blisses be upon thee, my sweet son!—
Thus the fair goddess: while Endymion
Knelt to receive those accents halcyon.

Meantime a glorious revelry began
Before the Water-Monarch. Nectar ran
In courteous fountains to all cups outreach'd;
And plunder'd vines, teeming exhaustless, pleach'd
New growth about each shell and pendent lyre;
The which, in disentangling for their fire,
Pull'd down fresh foliage and coverture
For dainty toying. Cupid, empire-sure,
Flutter'd and laugh'd, and oft-times through the throng
Made a delighted way. Then dance, and song,
And garlanding grew wild; and pleasure reign'd.
In harmless tendril they each other chain'd,
And strove who should be smother'd deepest in
Fresh crush of leaves.

O 'tis a very sin
For one so weak to venture his poor verse
In such a place as this. O do not curse,
High Muses! let him hurry to the ending.

All suddenly were silent. A soft blending
Of dulcet instruments came charmingly;
And then a hymn.

'KING of the stormy sea!
Brother of Jove, and co-inheritor
Of elements! Eternally before
Thee the waves awful bow. Fast, stubborn rock,

At thy fear'd trident shrinking, doth unlock
Its deep foundations, hissing into foam.
All mountain-rivers, lost in the wide home
Of thy capacious bosom, ever flow.
Thou frownest, and old Eolus thy foe
Skulks to his cavern, 'mid the gruff complaint
Of all his rebel tempests. Dark clouds faint
When, from thy diadem, a silver gleam
Slants over blue dominion. Thy bright team
Gulphs in the morning light, and scuds along
To bring thee nearer to that golden song
Apollo singeth, while his chariot
Waits at the doors of heaven. Thou art not
For scenes like this: an empire stern hast thou;
And it hath furrow'd that large front: yet now
As newly come to heaven, dost thou sit
To blend and interknit
Subdued majesty with this glad time.
O shell-borne King sublime!
We lay our hearts before thee evermore—
We sing and we adore!

'Breathe softly, flutes;
Be tender of your strings, ye soothing lutes;
Nor be the trumpet heard! O vain, O vain;
Not flowers budding in an April rain,
Nor breath of sleeping dove, nor river's flow,—
No, nor the Eolian twang of Love's own bow,
Can mingle music fit for the soft ear
Of goddess Cythera!
Yet deign, white Queen of Beauty, thy fair eyes
On our soul's sacrifice.

'Bright-winged Child!
Who has another care when thou hast smil'd?
Unfortunates on earth, we see at last
All death-shadows, and glooms that overcast
Our spirits, fann'd away by thy light pinions.
O sweetest essence! sweetest of all minions!
God of warm pulses, and dishevell'd hair,
And panting bosoms bare!
Dear unseen light in darkness! eclipser

Of light in light! delicious poisoner!
Thy venom'd goblet will we quaff until
We fill—we fill!
And by thy Mother's lips——'

Was heard no more

For clamour, when the golden palace door
Opened again, and from without, in shone
A new magnificence. On oozy throne
Smooth-moving came Oceanus the old,
To take a latest glimpse at his sheep-fold,
Before he went into his quiet cave
To muse for ever—Then a lucid wave,
Scoop'd from its trembling sisters of mid-sea,
Afloat, and pillowing up the majesty
Of Doris, and the Egean seer, her spouse—
Next, on a dolphin, clad in laurel boughs,
Theban Amphion leaning on his lute:
His fingers went across it—All were mute
To gaze on Amphitrite, queen of pearls,
And Thetis pearly too.—

The palace whirls

Around giddy Endymion; seeing he
Was there far strayed from mortality.
He could not bear it—shut his eyes in vain;
Imagination gave a dizzier pain.
'O I shall die! sweet Venus, be my stay!
Where is my lovely mistress? Well-away!
I die—I hear her voice—I feel my wing—'
At Neptune's feet he sank. A sudden ring
Of Nereids were about him, in kind strife
To usher back his spirit into life:
But still he slept. At last they interwove
Their cradling arms, and purpos'd to convey
Towards a crystal bower far away.

Lo! while slow carried through the pitying crowd,
To his inward senses these words spake aloud;
Written in star-light on the dark above:
Dearest Endymion! my entire love!
How have I dwelt in fear of fate: 'tis done—

*Immorta! bliss for me too hast thou won.
 Arise then! for the hen-dove shall not hatch
 Her ready eggs, before I'll kissing snatch
 Thee into endless heaven. Awake! awake!*

The youth at once arose: a placid lake
 Came quiet to his eyes; and forest green,
 Cooler than all the wonders he had seen,
 Lull'd with its simple song his fluttering breast.
 How happy once again in grassy nest!

BOOK FOUR

MUSE of my native land! loftiest Muse!
 O first-born on the mountains! by the hues
 Of heaven on the spiritual air begot:
 Long didst thou sit alone in northern grot,
 While yet our England was a wolfish den;
 Before our forests heard the talk of men;
 Before the first of Druids was a child;—
 Long didst thou sit amid our regions wild
 Rapt in a deep prophetic solitude.
 There came an eastern voice of solemn mood:—
 Yet wast thou patient. Then sang forth the Nine,
 Apollo's garland:—yet didst thou divine
 Such home-bred glory, that they cry'd in vain,
 'Come hither, Sister of the Island!' Plain
 Spake fair Ausonia; and once more she spake
 A higher summons:—still didst thou betake
 Thee to thy native hopes. O thou hast won
 A full accomplishment! The thing is done,
 Which undone, these our latter days had risen
 On barren souls. Great Muse, thou know'st what prison,
 Of flesh and bone, curbs, and confines, and frets
 Our spirit's wings: despondency besets
 Our pillows; and the fresh to-morrow morn
 Seems to give forth its light in very scorn
 Of our dull, uninspir'd, snail-paced lives.
 Long have I said, how happy he who shrives
 To thee! But then I thought on poets gone,
 And could not pray:—nor can I now—so on
 I move to the end in lowliness of heart.—

'Ah, woe is me! that I should fondly part
From my dear native land! Ah, foolish maid!
Glad was the hour, when, with thee, myriads bade
Adieu to Ganges and their pleasant fields!
To one so friendless the clear freshet yields
A bitter coolness; the ripe grape is sour:
Yet I would have, great gods! but one short hour
Of native air—let me but die at home.'
Endymion to heaven's airy dome
Was offering up a hecatomb of vows,
When these words reach'd him. Whereupon he bows
His head through thorny-green entanglement
Of underwood, and to the sound is bent,
Anxious as hind towards her hidden fawn

'Is no one near to help me? No fair dawn
Of life from charitable voice? No sweet saying
To set my dull and sadden'd spirit playing?
No hand to toy with mine? No lips so sweet
That I may worship them? No eyelids meet
To twinkle on my bosom? No one dies
Before me, till from these enslaving eyes
Redemption sparkles!—I am sad and lost.'

Thou, Carian lord, hadst better have been tost
Into a whirlpool. Vanish into air,
Warm mountaineer! for canst thou only bear
A woman's sigh alone and in distress?
See not her charms! Is Phœbe passionless?
Phœbe is fairer far—O gaze no more:—
Yet if thou wilt behold all beauty's store,
Behold her panting in the forest grass!
Do not those curls of glossy jet surpass
For tenderness the arms so idly lain
Amongst them? Feelest not a kindred pain,
To see such lovely eyes in swimming search
After some warm delight, that seems to perch
Dovelike in the dim cell lying beyond
Their upper lids?—Hist!

'O for Hermes' wand,
To touch this flower into human shape!

That woodland Hyacinthus could escape
 From his green prison, and here kneeling down
 Call me his queen, his second life's fair crown!
 Ah me, how I could love!—My soul doth melt
 For the unhappy youth—Love! I have left
 So faint a kindness, such a meek surrender
 To what my own full thoughts had made too tender,
 That but for tears my life had fled away!—
 Ye deaf and senseless minutes of the day,
 And thou, old forest, hold ye this for true,
 There is no lightning, no authentic dew
 But in the eye of love: there's not a sound,
 Melodious howsoever, can confound
 The heavens and earth in one to such a death
 As doth the voice of love: there's not a breath
 Will mingle kindly with the meadow air,
 Till it has panted round, and stolen a share
 Of passion from the heart!—

Upon a bough

He leant, wretched. He surely cannot now
 Thirst for another love: O impious,
 That he can even dream upon it thus!—
 Thought he, 'Why am I not as are the dead,
 Since to a woe like this I have been led
 Through the dark earth, and through the wondrous sea?
 Goddess! I love thee not the less: from thee
 By Juno's smile I turn not—no, no, no—
 While the great waters are at ebb and flow.—
 I have a triple soul! O fond pretence—
 For both, for both my love is so immense,
 I feel my heart is cut for them in twain.'

And so he groan'd, as one by beauty slain.
 The lady's heart beat quick, and he could see
 Her gentle bosom heave tumultuously.
 He sprang from his green covert: there she lay,
 Sweet as a muskrose upon new-made hay;
 With all her limbs on tremble, and her eyes
 Shut softly up alive. To speak he tries.
 'Fair damsel, pity me! forgive that I
 Thus violate thy bower's sanctity!

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O pardon me, for I am full of grief—
Grief born of thee, young angel! fairest thief!
Who stolen hast away the wings wherewith
I was to top the heavens. Dear maid, sith
Thou art my executioner, and I feel
Loving and hatred, misery and weal,
Will in a few short hours be nothing to me,
And all my story that much passion slew me;
Do smile upon the evening of my days:
And, for my tortur'd brain begins to craze,
Be thou my nurse; and let me understand
How dying I shall kiss that lily hand.—
Dost weep for me? Then shall I be content.
Scowl on, ye fates! until the firmament
Outblackens Erebus, and the full-cavern'd earth
Crumbles into itself. By the cloud girth
Of Jove, those tears have given me a thirst
To meet oblivion.'—As her heart would burst
The maiden sobb'd awhile, and then replied:
'Why must such desolation betide
As that thou speakest of? Are not these green nooks
Empty of all misfortune? Do the brooks
Utter a gorgon voice? Does yonder thrush,
Schooling its half-fledg'd little ones to brush
About the dewy forest, whisper tales?—
Speak not of grief, young stranger, or cold snails
Will slime the rose to night. Though if thou wilt,
Methinks 'twould be a guilt—a very guilt—
Not to companion thee, and sigh away
The light—the dusk—the dark—till break of day!
'Dear lady,' said Endymion, 'tis past:
I love thee! and my days can never last.
That I may pass in patience still speak:
Let me have music dying, and I seek
No more delight—I bid adieu to all.
Didst thou not after other climates call,
And murmur about Indian streams!'—Then she,
Sitting beneath the midmost forest tree,
For pity sang this roundelay———

'O Sorrow,
Why dost borrow
The natural hue of health, from vermeil lips?—
To give maiden blushes
To the white rose bushes?
Oris't thy dewy hand the daisy tips?

'O Sorrow,
Why dost borrow
The lustrous passion from a falcon-eye?—
To give the glow-worm light?
Or, on a moonless night,
To tinge, on syren shores, the salt sea-spray?

'O Sorrow,
Why dost borrow
The mellow ditties from a mourning tongue?—
To give at evening pale
Unto the nightingale,
That thou mayst listen the cold dewes among?

'O Sorrow,
Why dost borrow
Heart's lightness from the merriment of May?—
A lover would not tread
A cowslip on the head,
Though he should dance from eve till peep of day—
Nor any drooping flower
Held sacred for thy bower,
Wherever he may sport himself and play.

'To Sorrow,
I bade good-morrow,
And thought to leave her far away behind;
But cheerly, but cheerly,
She loves me dearly;
She is so constant to me, and so kind:
I would deceive her
And so leave her,
But ah! she is so constant and so kind.

'Beneath my palm trees, by the river side,
I sat a weeping: in the whole world wide
There was no one to ask me why I wept,—
And so I kept
Brimming the water-lily cups with tears
Cold as my fears.

'Beneath my palm trees, by the river side,
I sat a weeping: what enamour'd bride,
Cheated by shadowy wooer from the clouds,
But hides and shrouds
Beneath dark palm trees by a river side?

'And as I sat, over the light blue hills
There came a noise of revellers: the rills
Into the wide stream came of purple hue—
'Twas Bacchus and his crew!
The earnest trumpet spake, and silver thrills
From kissing cymbals made a merry din—
'Twas Bacchus and his kin!
Like to a moving vintage down they came,
Crown'd with green leaves, and faces all on flame;
All madly dancing through the pleasant valley,
To scare thee, Melancholy!
O then, O then, thou wast a simple name!
And I forgot thee, as the berried holly
By shepherds if forgotten, when, in June,
Tall chestnuts keep away the sun and moon:—
I rush'd into the folly!

'Within his car, aloft, young Bacchus stood,
Trifling his ivy-dart, in dancing mood,
With sidelong laughing;
And little rills of crimson wine imbrued
His plump white arms, and shoulders, enough white
For Venus' pearly bite:
And near him rode Silenus on his ass,
Pelted with flowers as he on did pass
Tipsily quaffing.

'Whence came ye, merry Damsels! whence came ye!
So many, and so many, and such glee?

Why have ye left your bowers desolate,
Your lutes, and gentler fate?—
‘We follow Bacchus! Bacchus on the wing,
A conquering!
Bacchus, young Bacchus! good or ill betide,
We dance before him thorough kingdoms wide:—
Come hither, lady fair, and joined be
To our wild minstrelsy!’”

‘Whence came ye, jolly Satyrs! whence came ye!
So many, and so many, and such glee?
Why have ye left your forest haunts, why left
Your nuts in oak-tree cleft?—
‘For wine, for wine we left our kernel tree;
For wine we left our heath, and yellow brooms,
And cold mushrooms;
For wine we follow Bacchus through the earth;
Great God of breathless cups and chirping mirth!—
Come hither, lady fair, and joined be
To our mad minstrelsy!’”

‘Over wide streams and mountains great we went,
And, save when Bacchus kept his ivy tent,
Onward the tiger and the leopard pants,
With Asian elephants:
Onward these myriads—with song and dance,
With zebras striped, and sleek Arabians’ prance,
Web-footed alligators, crocodiles,
Bearing upon their scaly backs, in files,
Plump infant laughers mimicking the coil
Of seamen, and stout galley-rowers’ toil:
With toying oars and silken sails they glide,
Nor care for wind and tide.

‘Mounted on panthers’ furs and lions’ manes,
From rear to van they scour about the plains;
A three days’ journey in a moment done:
And always, at the rising of the sun,
About the wilds they hunt with spear and horn,
On spleenful unicorn.

'I saw Osirian Egypt kneel adown
 Before the vine-wreath crown!
I saw parch'd Abyssinia rouse and sing
 To the silver cymbals' ring!
I saw the whelming vintage hotly pierce
 Old Tartary the fierce!
The kings of Inde their jewel-sceptres vail,
And from their treasures scatter pearled hail;
Great Brahma from his mystic heaven groans,
 And all his priesthood moans;
Before young Bacchus' eye-wink turning pale.—
Into these regions came I following him,
Sick hearted, weary—so I took a whim
To stray away into these forests drear
 Alone, without a peer:
And I have told thee all thou mayest hear.

 'Young stranger!
 I've been a ranger
In search of pleasure throughout every clime:
 Alas, 'tis not for me!
 Bewitch'd I sure must be,
To lose in grieving all my maiden prime.

 'Come then, Sorrow!
 Sweetest Sorrow!
Like an own babe I nurse thee on my breast:
 I thought to leave thee
 And deceive thee,
But now of all the world I love thee best.

 'There is not one,
 No, no, not one
But thee to comfort a poor lonely maid;
 Thou art her mother,
 And her brother,
Her playmate, and her wooer in the shade.'

O what a sigh she gave in finishing,
And look, quite dead to every worldly thing!
Endymion could not speak, but gazed on her;

And listened to the wind that now did stir
About the crisped oaks full drearily,
Yet with as sweet a softness as might be
Remember'd from its velvet summer song.
At last he said: 'Poor lady, how thus long
Have I been able to endure that voice?
Fair Melody! kind Syren! I've no choice;
I must be thy sad servant evermore:
I cannot choose but kneel here and adore.
Alas, I must not think—by Phœbe, no!
Let me not think, soft Angel! shall it be so?
Say, beautifullest, shall I never think?
O thou could'st foster me beyond the brink
Of recollection! make my watchful care
Close up its bloodshot eyes, nor see despair!
Do gently murder half my soul, and I
Shall feel the other half so utterly!—
I'm giddy at that cheek so fair and smooth;
O let it blush so ever! let it soothe
My madness! let it mantle rosy-warm
With the tinge of love, panting in safe alarm.—
This cannot be thy hand, and yet it is;
And this is sure thine other softling—this
Thine own fair bosom, and I am so near!
Wilt fall asleep? O let me sip that tear!
And whisper one sweet word that I may know
This is the world—sweet dewy blossom!'—*Woe!*
Woe! Woe to that Endymion! Where is he?—
Even these words went echoing dismally
Through the wide forest—a most fearful tone,
Like one repenting in his latest moan;
And while it died away a shade pass'd by,
As of a thunder cloud. When arrows fly
Through the thick branches, poor ring-doves sleek forth
Their timid necks and tremble; so these both
Leant to each other trembling, and sat so
Waiting for some destruction—when lo,
Foot-feather'd Mercury appear'd sublime
Beyond the tall tree tops; and in less time
Than shoots the slanted hail-storm, down he dropt
Towards the ground; but rested not, nor stopt
One moment from his home: only the sword

He with his wand light touch'd, and heavenward
Swifter than sight was gone—even before
The teeming earth a sudden witness bore
Of his swift magic. Diving swans appear
Above the crystal circlings white and clear;
And catch the cheated eye in wild surprise,
How they can dive in sight and unseen rise—
So from the turf outsprang two steeds jet-black,
Each with large dark blue wings upon his back.
The youth of Caria plac'd the lovely dame
On one, and felt himself in spleen to tame
The other's fierceness. Through the air they flew,
High as the eagles. Like two drops of dew
Exhal'd to Phœbus' lips, away they are gone,
Far from the earth away—unseen, alone,
Among cool clouds and winds, but that the free,
The buoyant life of song can floating be
Above their heads, and follow them untir'd.—
Muse of my native land, am I inspir'd?
This is the giddy air, and I must spread
Wide pinions to keep here; nor do I dread
Or height, or depth, or width, or any chance
Precipitous: I have beneath my glance
Those towering horses and their mournful freight.
Could I thus sail, and see, and thus await
Fearless for power of thought, without thine aid?—

There is a sleepy dusk, an odorous shade
From some approaching wonder, and behold
Those winged steeds, with snorting nostrils bold
Snuff at its faint extreme, and seem to tire,
Dying to embers from their native fire!

There curl'd a purple mist around them; soon,
It seem'd as when around the pale new moon
Sad Zephyr droops the clouds like weeping willow:
'Twas Sleep slow journeying with head on pillow.
For the first time, since he came nigh dead born
From the old womb of night, his cave forlorn
Had he left more forlorn; for the first time,
He felt aloof the day and morning's prime—
Because into his depth Cimmerian

There came a dream, showing how a young man,
Ere a lean bat could plump its wintery skin,
Would at high Jove's empyreal footstool win
An immortality, and how espouse
Jove's daughter, and be reckon'd of his house.
Now was he slumbering towards heaven's gate,
That he might at the threshold one hour wait
To hear the marriage melodies, and then
Sink downward to his dusky cave again.
His litter of smooth semiluculent mist,
Diversely ting'd with rose and amethyst,
Puzzled those eyes that for the centre sought;
And scarcely for one moment could be caught
His sluggish form reposing motionless.
Those two on winged steeds, with all the stress
Of vision search'd for him, as one would look
Athwart the shallows of a river nook
To catch a glance at silver throated eels,—
Or from old Skiddaw's top, when fog conceals
His rugged forehead in a mantle pale,
With an eye-guess towards some pleasant vale
Descry a favourite hamlet faint and far.

These raven horses, though they foster'd are
Of earth's splenetic fire, dully drop
Their full-vein'd ears, nostrils blood wide, and stop;
Upon the spiritless mist have they outspread
Their ample feathers, are in slumber dead,—
And on these pinions, level in mid air,
Endymion sleepeth and the lady fair.
Slowly they sail, slowly as icy isle
Upon a calm sea drifting: and meanwhile
The mournful wanderer dreams. Behold! he walks
On heaven's pavement; brotherly he talks
To divine powers: from his hand full fain
Juno's proud birds are pecking pearly grain:
He tries the nerve of Phoebus' golden bow,
And asketh where the golden apples grow:
Upon his arm he braces Pallas' shield,
And strives in vain to unsettle and wield
A Jovian thunderbolt: arch Hebe brings
A full-brimm'd goblet, dances lightly, sings

And tantalizes long; at last he drinks,
And lost in pleasure at her feet he sinks,
Touching with dazzled lips her starlight hand.
He blows a bugle,—an ethereal band
Are visible above: the Seasons four,—
Green-kyrtled Spring, flush Summer, golden store
In Autumn's sickle, Winter frosty hoar,
Join dance with shadowy Hours; while still the blast,
In swells unmitigated, still doth last
To sway their floating morris. 'Whose is this?
Whose bugle?' he inquires: they smile—'O Dis!
Why is this mortal here? Dost thou not know
Its mistress' lips? Not thou!—'Tis Dian's: lo!
She rises crescented!' He looks, 'tis she,
His very goddess: good-bye earth, and sea,
And air, and pains, and care, and suffering;
Good-bye to all but love! Then doth he spring
Towards her, and awakes—and, strange, o'erhead,
Of those same fragrant exhalations bred,
Beheld awake his very dream: the gods
Stood smiling; merry Hebe laughs and nods:
And Phœbe bends towards him crescented.
O state perplexing! On the pinion bed,
Too well awake, he feels the panting side
Of his delicious lady. He who died
For soaring too audacious in the sun,
Where that same treacherous wax began to run,
Felt not more tongue-tied than Endymion.
His heart leapt up as to its rightful throne,
To that fair shadow'd passion puls'd its way—
Ah, what perplexity! Ah, well a day!
So fond, so beauteous was his bed-fellow,
He could not help but kiss her: then he grew
Awhile forgetful of all beauty save
Young Phœbe's, golden hair'd; and so 'gan crave
Forgiveness: yet he turn'd once more to look
At the sweet sleeper,—all his soul was shook,—
She press'd his hand in slumber; so once more
He could not help but kiss her and adore.
At this the shadow wept, melting away.
The Latmian started up: 'Bright goddess, stay!
Search my most hidden breast! By truth's own tongue,

I have no dædale heart: why is it wrung
To desperation? Is there nought for me,
Upon the bourne of bliss, but misery?’

These words awoke the stranger of dark tresses:
Her dawning love-look rapt Endymion blesses
With ’haviour soft. Sleep yawn’d from underneath.
‘Thou swan of Ganges, let us no more breathe.
This murky phantasm! thou contented seem’st
Pillow’d in lovely idleness, nor dream’st
What horrors may discomfort thee and me.
Ah, shouldst thou die from my heart-treachery!—
Yet did she merely weep—her gentle soul
Hath no revenge in it: as it is whole
In tenderness, would I were whole in love!
Can I prize thee, fair maid, all price above,
Even when I feel as true as innocence?
I do, I do.—What is this soul then? Whence
Came it? It does not seem my own, and I
Have no self-passion or identity.
Some fearful end must be: where, where is it?
By Nemesis, I see my spirit flit
Alone about the dark—Forgive me, sweet:
Shall we away?’ He rous’d the steeds: they beat
Their wings chivalrous into the clear air,
Leaving old Sleep within his vapoury lair.

The good-night blush of eve was waning slow
And Vesper, risen star, began to throe
In the dusk heavens silverly, when they
Thus sprang direct towards the Galaxy.
Nor did speed hinder converse soft and strange—
Eternal oaths and vows they interchange,
In such wise, in such temper, so aloof
Up in the winds, beneath a starry roof,
So witless of their doom, that verily
’Tis well nigh past man’s search their hearts to see;
Whether they wept, or laugh’d, or griev’d, or toy’d—
Most like with joy gone mad, with sorrow cloy’d.

Full facing their swift flight, from ebon streak,
The moon put forth a little diamond peak,

No bigger than an unobserved star,
Or tiny point of fairy scymetar;
Bright signal that she only stoop'd to tie
Her silver sandals, ere deliciously
She bow'd into the heavens her timid head.
Slowly she rose, as though she would have fled,
While to his lady meek the Carian turn'd,
To mark if her dark eyes had yet discern'd
This beauty in its birth—Despair! despair!
He saw her body fading gaunt and spare
In the cold moonshine. Straight he seiz'd her wrist;
It melted from his grasp: her hand he kiss'd,
And, horror! kiss'd his own—he was alone.
Her steed a little higher soar'd, and then
Dropt hawkwise to the earth.

There lies a den,
Beyond the seeming confines of the space
Made for the soul to wander in and trace
Its own existence, of remotest glooms.
Dark regions are around it, where the tombs
Of buried griefs the spirit sees, but scarce
One hour doth linger weeping, for the pierce
Of new-born woe it feels more inly smart:
And in these regions many a venom'd dart
At random flies; they are the proper home
Of every ill: the man is yet to come
Who hath not journeyed in this native hell.
But few have ever felt how calm and well
Sleep may be had in that deep den of all.
There anguish does not sting; nor pleasure pall:
Woe-hurricanes beat ever at the gate,
Yet all is still within and desolate.
Beset with painful gusts, within ye hear
No sound so loud as when on curtain'd bier
The death-watch tick is stifled. Enter none
Who strive therefore: on the sudden it is won.
Just when the sufferer begins to burn,
Then it is free to him; and from an urn,
Still fed by melting ice, he takes a draught—
Young Semele such richness never quaff
In her maternal longing! Happy gloom!

Dark Paradise! where pale becomes the bloom
Of health by due; where silence dreariest
Is most articulate; where hopes infest;
Where those eyes are the brightest far that keep
Their lids shut longest in a dreamless sleep.
O happy spirit-home! O wondrous soul!
Pregnant with such a den to save the whole
In thine own depth. Hail, gentle Carian!
For, never since thy griefs and woes began,
Hast thou felt so content: a grievous feud
Hath led thee to this Cave of Quietude.
Aye, his lull'd soul was there, although upborne
With dangerous speed: and so he did not mourn
Because he knew not whither he was going.
So happy was he, not the aerial blowing
Of trumpets at clear parley from the east
Could rouse from that fine relish, that high feast.
They stung the feather'd horse: with fierce alarm
He flapp'd towards the sound. Alas, no charm
Could lift Endymion's head, or he had view'd
A skyey mask, a pinion'd multitude,—
And silvery was its passing: voices sweet
Warbling the while as if to lull and greet
The wanderer in his path. Thus warbled they,
While past the vision went in bright array.

'Who, who from Dian's feast would be away?
For all the golden bowers of the day
Are empty left? Who, who away would be
From Cynthia's wedding and festivity?
Not Hesperus: lo! upon his silver wings
He leans away for highest heaven and slings,
Snapping his lucid fingers merrily!—
Ah, Zephyrus! art here, and Flora too!
Ye tender bibbers of the rain and dew,
Young playmates of the rose and daffodil,
Be careful, ere ye enter in, to fill

Your baskets high
With fennel green, and balm, and golden pines,
Savory, latter-mint, and columbines,
Cool parsley, basil sweet, and sunny thyme;
Yea, every flower and leaf of every clime,

All gather'd in the dewy morning: hie
 Away! fly, fly!—
 Crystalline brother of the belt of heaven,
 Aquarius! to whom king Jove has given
 Two liquid pulse streams 'stead of feather'd wings,
 Two fan-like fountains,—thine illuminings
 For Dian play:
 Dissolve the frozen purity of air;
 Let thy white shoulders silvery and bare
 Show cold through watery pinions; make more bright
 The Star-Queen's crescent on her marriage night:
 Haste, haste away!—
 Castor has tam'd the planet Lion, see!
 And of the Bear has Pollux mastery:
 A third is the race! who is the third,
 Speeding away swift as the eagle bird?
 The ramping Centaur!
 The Lion's mane's on end: the Bear how fierce!
 The Centaur's arrow ready seems to pierce
 Some enemy: far forth his bow is bent
 Into the blue of heaven. He'll be shent,
 Pale unrelentor,
 When he shall hear the wedding lutes a playing.—
 Andromeda! sweet woman! why delaying
 So timidly among the stars: come hither!
 Join this bright throng, and nimbly follow whither
 They all are going.
 Danae's Son, before Jove newly bow'd,
 Has wept for thee, calling to Jove aloud.
 Thee, gentle lady, did he disenthral:
 Ye shall for ever live and love, for all
 Thy tears are flowing.—
 By Daphne's fright, behold Apollo!—'

More

Endymion heard not: down his steed him bore,
 Prone to the green head of a misty hill.

His first touch of the earth went nigh to kill.
 'Alas!' said he, 'were I but always borne
 Through dangerous winds, had but my footsteps worn
 A path in hell, for ever would I bless

Horrors which nourish an uneasiness.
For my own sullen conquering: to him
Who lives beyond earth's boundary, grief is dim,
Sorrow is but a shadow: now I see
The grass; I feel the solid ground—Ah, me!
It is thy voice—divinest! Where?—who? who
Left thee so quiet on this bed of dew?
Behold upon this happy earth we are;
Let us ay love each other; let us fare
On forest-fruits. and never, never go
Among the abodes of mortals here below,
Or be by phantoms duped. O destiny!
Into a labyrinth now my soul would fly,
But with thy beauty will I deaden it.
Where didst thou melt to? By thee will I sit
For ever: let our fate stop here—a kid
I on this spot will offer: Pan will bid
Us live in peace, in love and peace among
His forest wildernesses. I have clung
To nothing, lov'd a nothing, nothing seen
Or felt but a great dream! O I have been
Presumptuous against love, against the sky,
Against all elements, against the tie
Of mortals each to each, against the blooms
Of flowers, rush of rivers, and the tombs
Of heroes gone! Against his proper glory
Has my own soul conspired: so my story
Will I to children utter, and repent.
There never liv'd a mortal man, who bent
His appetite beyond his natural sphere,
But starv'd and died. My sweetest Indian, here,
Here will I kneel, for thou redeemed hast
My life from too thin breathing: gone and past
Are cloudy phantasms. Caverns lone, farewell!
And air of visions, and the monstrous swell
Of visionary seas! No, never more
Shall airy voices cheat me to the shore
Of tangled wonder, breathless and aghast.
Adieu, my daintiest Dream! although so vast
My love is still for thee. The hour may come
When we shall meet in pure elysium.
On earth I may not love thee; and therefore

Doves will I offer up. and sweetest store
All through the teeming year: so thou wilt shine
On me, and on this damsel fair of mine,
And bless our simple lives. My Indian bliss!
My river-lily bud! one human kiss!
One sigh of real breath—one gentle squeeze,
Warm as a dove's nest among summer trees,
And warm with dew at ooze from living blood!
Whither didst melt? Ah, what of that!—all good
We'll talk about—no more of dreaming.—Now,
Where shall our dwelling be? Under the brow
Of some steep mossy hill, where ivy dun
Would hide us up, although spring leaves were none;
And where dark yew trees, as we rustle through,
Will drop their scarlet berry cups of dew?
O thou wouldst joy to live in such a place;
Dusk for our loves, yet light enough to grace
Those gentle limbs on mossy bed reclin'd:
For by one step the blue sky shouldst thou find,
And by another, in deep dell below,
See, through the trees, a little river go
All in its mid-day gold and glimmering.
Honey from out the gnarled hive I'll bring,
And apples, wan with sweetness, gather thee,—
Cresses that grow where no man may them see,
And sorrel untorn by the dew-claw'd stag:
Pipes will I fashion of the syrinx flag,
That thou mayst always know whither I roam,
When it shall please thee in our quiet home
To listen and think of love. Still let me speak;
Still let me dive into the joy I seek,—
For yet the past doth prison me. The rill,
Thou haply mayst delight in, will I fill
With fairy fishes from the mountain tarn,
And thou shalt feed them from the squirrel's barn.
Its bottom will I strew with amber shells,
And pebbles blue from deep enchanted wells.
Its sides I'll plant with dew-sweet eglantine,
And honeysuckles full of clear bee-wine.
I will entice this crystal rill to trace
Love's silver name upon the meadow's face.
I'll kneel to Vesta, for a flame of fire;

And to god Phœbus, for a golden lyre;
 To Empress Dian, for a hunting spear;
 To Vesper, for a taper silver-clear,
 That I may see thy beauty through the night;
 To Flora, and a nightingale shall light
 Tame on thy finger; to the River-gods,
 And they shall bring thee taper fishing-rods
 Of gold, and lines of Naiads' long bright tress.
 Heaven shield thee for thine utter loveliness!
 Thy mossy footstool shall the altar be
 'Fore which I'll bend, bending, dear love, to thee:
 Those lips shall be my Delphos, and shall speak
 Laws to my footsteps, colour to my cheek,
 Trembling or steadfastness to this same voice,
 And of three sweetest pleasurings the choice:
 And that affectionate light, those diamond things,
 Those eyes, those passions, those supreme pearl springs,
 Shall be my grief, or twinkle me to pleasure.
 Say, is not bliss within our perfect seisure?
 O that I could not doubt!'

The mountaineer

Thus strove by fancies vain and crude to clear
 His briar'd path to some tranquillity.
 It gave bright gladness to his lady's eye,
 And yet the tears she wept were tears of sorrow;
 Answering thus, just as the golden morrow
 Beam'd upward from the vallies of the east:
 'O that the flutter of this heart had ceas'd,
 Or the sweet name of love had pass'd away.
 Young feather'd tyrant! by a swift decay
 Wilt thou devote this body to the earth:
 And I do think that at my very birth
 I lisp'd thy blooming titles inwardly;
 For at the first, first dawn and thought of thee,
 With uplift hands I blest the stars of heaven.
 Art thou not cruel? Ever have I striven
 To think thee kind, but ah, it will not do!
 When yet a child, I heard that kisses drew
 Favour from thee, and so I kisses gave
 To the void air, bidding them find out loves
 But when I came to feel how far above

All fancy, pride, and fickle maidenhood,
All earthly pleasure, all imagin'd good,
Was the warm tremble of a devout kiss,—
Even then, that moment, at the thought of this.
Fainting I fell into a bed of flowers,
And languish'd there three days. Ye milder powers,
Am I not cruelly wrong'd? Believe, believe
Me, dear Endymion, were I to weave
With my own fancies garlands of sweet life,
Thou shouldst be one of all. Ah, bitter strife!
I may not be thy love: I am forbidden—
Indeed I am—thwarted, affrighted, chidden,
By things I trembled at, and gorgon wrath.
Twice hast thou ask'd whither I went: henceforth
Ask me no more! I may not utter it,
Nor may I be thy love. We might commit
Ourselves at once to vengeance; we might die;
We might embrace and die: voluptuous thought!
Enlarge not to my hunger, or I'm caught
In trammels of perverse deliciousness.
No, no, that shall not be: thee will I bless,
And bid a long adieu.'

The Carian

No word return'd: both lovelorn, silent, wan,
Into the vallies green together went.
For wandering, they were perforce content
To sit beneath a fair lone beechen tree;
Nor at each other gaz'd, but heavily
Por'd on its hazle cirque of shedded leaves.

Endymion! unhappy! it nigh grieves
Me to behold thee thus in last extreme:
Ensky'd ere this, but truly that I deem
Truth the best music in a first-born song.
Thy lute-voic'd brother will I sing ere long,
And thou shalt aid—hast thou not aided me?
Yes, moonlight Emperor! felicity
Has been thy meed for many thousand years;
Yet often have I, on the brink of tears,
Mourn'd as if yet thou wert a forester;—
Forgetting the old tale.

He did not stir
His eyes from the dead leaves, or one small pulse
Of joy he might have felt. The spirit culls
Unfaded amaranth, when wild it strays
Through the old garden-ground of boyish days.
A little onward ran the very stream
By which he took his first soft poppy dream;
And on the very bark 'against which he leant
A crescent he had carv'd, and round it spent
His skill in little stars. The teeming tree
Had swollen and green'd the pious charactery,
But not ta'en out. Why, there was not a slope
Up which he had not fear'd the antelope;
And not a tree, beneath whose rooty shade
He had not with his tamed leopards play'd:
Nor could an arrow light, or javelin,
Fly in the air where his had never been—
And yet he knew it not.

O treachery!
Why does his lady smile, pleasing her eye
With all his sorrowing? He sees her not.
But who so stares on him? His sister sure!
Peona of the woods!—Can she endure—
Impossible—how dearly they embrace!
His lady smiles; delight is in her face;
It is no treachery.

'Dear brother mine!
Endymion, weep not so! Why shouldst thou pine
When all great Latmos so exalt wilt be?
Thank the great gods, and look not bitterly;
And speak not one pale word, and sigh no more.
Sure I will not believe thou hast such store
Of grief, to last thee to my kiss again.
Thou surely canst not bear a mind in pain,
Come hand in hand with one so beautiful.
Be happy both of you! for I will pull
The flowers of autumn for your coronals.
Pan's holy priest for young Endymion calls;
And when he is restor'd, thou, fairest dame,
Shalt be our queen. Now, is it not a shame

To see ye thus,—not very, very sad?
Perhaps ye are too happy to be glad:
O feel as if it were a common day;
Free-voic'd as one who never was away.
No tongue shall ask, whence come ye? but ye shall
Be gods of your own rest imperial.
Not even I, for one whole month, will pry
Into the hours that have pass'd us by,
Since in my arbour I did sing to thee.
O Hermes! on this very night will be
A hymning up to Cynthia, queen of light;
For the soothsayers old saw yesternight
Good visions in the air,—whence will befall,
As say these sages, health perpetual
To shepherds and their flocks; and furthermore,
In Dian's face they read the gentle lore:
Therefore for her these vesper-carols are.
Our friends will all be there from nigh and far.
Many upon thy death have ditties made;
And many, even now, their foreheads shade
With cypress, on a day of sacrifice.
New singing for our maids shalt thou devise,
And pluck the sorrow from our huntsmen's brows.
Tell me, my lady-queen, how to espouse
This wayward brother to his rightful joys!
His eyes are on thee bent, as thou didst poise
His fate most goddess-like. Help me, I pray,
To lure—Endymion, dear brother say, say
What ails thee?' He could bear no more, and so
Bent his soul fiercely like a spiritual bow,
And twang'd it inwardly, and calmly said:
'I would have thee my only friend, sweet maid!
My only visitor! not ignorant though,
That those deceptions which for pleasure go
'Mong men, are pleasures real as real may be:
But there are higher ones I may not see,
If impiously an earthly realm I take.
Since I saw thee, I have been wide awake
Night after night, and day by day, until
Of the empyrean I have drunk my fill.
Let it content thee, Sister, seeing me
More happy than betides mortality.

A hermit young, I'll live in mossy cave,
Where thou alone shalt come to me, and lave
Thy spirit in the wonders I shall tell.
Through me the shepherd realm shall prosper well;
For to thy tongue will I all health confide.
And, for my sake, let this young maid abide
With thee as a dear sister. Thou alone,
Peona, mayst return to me. I own
This may sound strangely: but when, dearest girl,
Thou seest it for my happiness, no pearl
Will trespass down those cheeks. Companion fair!
Wilt be content to dwell with her, to share
'This sister's love with me?' Like one resign'd
And bent by circumstance, and thereby blind
In self-commitment, thus that meek unknown:
'Aye, but a buzzing by my ears has flown,
Of jubilee to Dian:—truth I heard!
Well then, I see there is no little bird,
Tender soever, but is Jove's own care.
Long have I sought for rest, and, unaware,
Behold I find it! so exalted too!
So after my own heart! I knew, I knew
There was a place untenanted in it:
In that same void white Chastity shall sit,
And monitor me nightly to lone slumber.
With sanest lips I vow me to the number
Of Dian's sisterhood; and, kind lady,
With thy good help, this very night shall see
My future days to her fane consecrate.'

As feels a dreamer what doth most create
His own particular fright, so these three felt:
Or like one who, in after ages, knelt
To Lucifer or Baal, when he'd pine
After a little sleep: or when in mine
Far under-ground, a sleeper meets his friends
Who know him not. Each diligently bends
Towards common thoughts and things for very fear;
Striving their ghastly malady to cheer,
By thinking it a thing of yes and no,
That housewives talk of. But the spirit-blow
Was struck, and all were dreamers. At the last

Endymion said: 'Are not our fates all cast?
Why stand we here? Adieu, ye tender pair!
Adieu!' Whereat those maidens, with wild stare,
Walk'd dizzily away. Pained and hot
His eyes went after them, until they got
Near to a cypress grove, whose deadly maw,
In one swift moment, would what then he saw
Engulph for ever. 'Stay!' he cried, 'ah, stay!
Turn, damsels! hist! one word I have to say.
Sweet Indian, I would see thee once again.
It is a thing I dote on: so I'd fain,
Peona, ye should hand in hand repair
Into those holy groves, that silent are
Behind great Dian's temple. I'll be yon,
At vesper's earliest twinkle—they are gone—
But once, once, once again—' At this he press'd
His hands against his face, and then did rest
His head upon a mossy hillock green,
And so remain'd as he a corpse had been
All the long day; save when he scanty lifted
His eyes abroad, to see how shadows shifted
With the slow move of time,—sluggish and weary
Until the poplar tops, in journey dreary,
Had reach'd the river's brim. Then up he rose,
And, slowly as that very river flows,
Walk'd towards the temple grove with this lament:
'Why such a golden eve? The breeze is sent
Careful and soft, that not a leaf may fall
Before the serene father of them all
Bows down his summer head below the west.
Now am I of breath, speech, and speed possest,
But at the setting I must bid adieu
To her for the last time. Night will strew
On the damp grass myriads of lingering leaves,
And with them shall I die; nor much it grieves
To die, when summer dies on the cold sward.
Why, I have been a butterfly, a lord
Of flowers, garlands, love-knots, silly posies,
Groves, meadows, melodies, and arbour roses;
My kingdom's at its death, and just it is
That I should die with it: so in all this
We miscal grief, bale, sorrow, heartbreak, woe,

What is there to plain of? By Titan's foe
I am but rightly served.' So saying, he
Tripp'd lightly on, in sort of deathful glee;
Laughing at the clear stream and setting sun,
As though they jests had been: nor had he done
His laugh at nature's holy countenance,
Until that grove appear'd, as if perchance,
And then his tongue with sober seemlihed
Gave utterance as he entered: 'Ha! I said,
'King of the butterflies; but by this gloom,
And by old Rhadamanthus' tongue of doom,
'This dusk religion, pomp of solitude,
And the Promethean clay by thief endued,
By old Saturnus' forelock, by his head
Shook with eternal palsy, I did wed
Myself to things of light from infancy;
And thus to be cast out, thus lorn to die,
Is sure enough to make a mortal man
Grow impious.' So he inwardly began
On things for which no wording can be found;
Deeper and deeper sinking, until drown'd
Beyond the reach of music: for the choir
Of Cynthia he heard not, though rough briar
Nor muffling thicket interpos'd to dull
The vesper hymn, far swollen, soft and full,
Through the dark pillars of those sylvan aisles.
He saw not the two maidens, nor their smiles,
Wan as primroses gather'd at midnight
By chilly finger'd spring. 'Unhappy wight!
Endymion!' said Peona, 'we are here!
What wouldst thou ere we all are laid on bier?'
Then he embrac'd her, and his lady's hand
Press'd, saying: 'Sister, I would have command,
If it were heaven's will, on our sad fate.'
At which that dark-ey'd stranger stood elate
And said, in a new voice, but sweet as love,
To Endymion's amaze: 'By Cupid's dove,
And so thou shalt! and by the lily truth
Of my own breast thou shalt, beloved youth!'
And as she spake, into her face there came
Light, as reflected from a silver flame:
Her long black hair swell'd ampler, in display

Full golden; in her eyes as brighter day
Dawn'd blue and full of love. Aye, he beheld
Phœbe, his passion! joyous she upheld
Her lucid bow, continuing thus: 'Drear, drear
Has our delaying been; but foolish fear
Withheld me first; and then decrees of fate;
And then 'twas fit that from this mortal state
Thou shouldst, my love, by some unlook'd for change
Be spiritualized. Peona, we shall range
These forests, and to thee they safe shall be
As was thy cradle; hither shalt thou flee
To meet us many a time.' Next Cynthia bright
Peona kiss'd, and bless'd with fair good night:
Her brother kiss'd her too, and knelt adown
Before his goddess, in a blissful swoon.
She gave her fair hands to him, and behold,
Before three swiftest kisses he had told,
They vanish'd far away!—Peona went
Home through the gloomy wood in wonderment.

LAMIA,
ISABELLA,
THE EVE OF ST. AGNES,
AND OTHER POEMS
(1820)

ADVERTISEMENT

IF any apology be thought necessary for the appearance of the unfinished poem of *HYPERION*, the publishers beg to state that they alone are responsible, as it was printed at their particular request, and contrary to the wish of the author. The poem was intended to have been of equal length with *ENDYMION*, but the reception given to that work discouraged the author from proceeding.

Fleet-Street, June 26, 1820

[This Advertisement was not desired by Keats, and its appearance caused him some vexation.]

NOTE TO LAMIA

THE verse itself is of a more succinct and restrained kind than that of *Endymion*, and shows his application to the art of John Dryden, as in Dryden's translations from Ovid's '*Metamorphoses*.' The tale is one of a metamorphosis. Keats is now intent on conveying a dogma in beautiful terms, though who the 'bald-head philosopher' was in real life—the man whose very look killed the beautiful—we must guess. Fancy, after all, is still very dear to the young poet and adorns his allegory without stint. In one aspect the sub-title might be the title of an eighteenth-century poem he knew well, '*The Pleasures of Imagination*.'

Thomas Hood turned the poem into a poetic play. The following lines may be worth comparing with the reader's own idea of Keats's parable or its original:

APOLLONIUS. *I say she is a snake—*

JULIUS. *And so say I;*

APOLLONIUS. *But not in the same sense—*

JULIUS. *No, not exactly.*

*You take that literal, which I interpret
But as a parable—a figure, feigned
By the elder sages (much inclined to mask
Their subtle meanings in dark allegories)
For those poisonous natures—those bewitching sins—
That armed and guarded with a woman's husk,
But viperous within, seduce young hearts,
And sting there they are cherished.*

Lamia

PART ONE

UPON a time, before the faery broods
Drove Nymph and Satyr from the prosperous woods,
Before King Oberon's bright diadem,
Sceptre, and mantle, clasp'd with dewy gem,
Frighted away the Dryads and the Fauns
From rushes green, and brakes, and cowslip'd lawns,
The ever-smitten Hermes empty left
His golden throne, bent warm on amorous theft:
From high Olympus had he stolen light,
On this side of Jove's clouds, to escape the sight
Of his great summoner, and made retreat
Into a forest on the shores of Crete.
For somewhere in that sacred island dwelt
A nymph, to whom all hoofed Satyrs knelt;
At whose white feet the languid Tritons poured
Pearls, while on land they wither'd and adored.
Fast by the springs where she to bathe was wont,
And in those meads where sometime she might haunt,
Were strewn rich gifts, unknown to any Muse,
Though Fancy's casket were unlock'd to choose.
Ah, what a world of love was at her feet!
So Hermes thought, and a celestial heat
Burnt from his winged heels to either ear,
That from a whiteness, as the lily clear,
Blush'd into roses 'mid his golden hair,
Fallen in jealous curls about his shoulders bare.
From vale to vale, from wood to wood, he flew,
Breathing upon the flowers his passion new,
And wound with many a river to its head,
To find where this sweet nymph prepar'd her secret bed:
In vain; the sweet nymph might nowhere be found,
And so he rested, on the lonely ground,
Pensive, and full of painful jealousies
Of the Wood-Gods, and even the very trees.
There as he stood, he heard a mournful voice,

Such as once heard, in gentle heart, destroys
All pain but pity: thus the lone voice spake:
'When from this wreathed tomb shall I awake!
'When move in a sweet body fit for life,
'And love, and pleasure, and the ruddy strife
'Of hearts and lips! Ah, miserable me!
The God, dove-footed, glided silently
Round bush and tree, soft-brushing, in his speed,
The taller grasses and full-flowering weed,
Until he found a palpitating snake,
Bright, and cirque-couchant in a dusky brake.

She was a gordian shape of dazzling hue,
Vermilion-spotted, golden, green, and blue;
Striped like a zebra, freckled like a pard,
Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson barr'd;
And full of silver moons, that, as she breathed,
Dissolv'd, or brighter shone, or interwreathed
Their lustres with the gloomier tapestries—
So rainbow-sided, touch'd with miseries,
She seem'd, at once, some penanced lady elf,
Some demon's mistress, or the demon's self.
Upon her crest she wore a wannish fire
Sprinkled with stars, like Ariadne's tiar:
Her head was serpent, but ah, bitter-sweet!
She had a woman's mouth with all its pearls complete:
And for her eyes: what could such eyes do there
But weep, and weep, that they were born so fair?
As Proserpine still weeps for her Sicilian air.
Her throat was serpent, but the words she spake
Came, as through bubbling honey, for Love's sake,
And thus; while Hermes on his pinions lay,
Like a stoop'd falcon ere he takes his prey.

'Fair Hermes, crown'd with feathers, fluttering light,
'I had a splendid dream of thee last night:
'I saw thee sitting, on a throne of gold,
'Among the Gods, upon Olympus old,
'The only sad one; for thou didst not hear
'The soft, lute-finger'd Muses chaunting clear,
'Nor even Apollo when he sang alone,
'Deaf to his throbbing throat's long, long melodious moan.

'I dreamt I saw thee, robed in purple flakes,
'Break amorous through the clouds, as morning breaks,
'And, swiftly as a bright Phœbean dart,
'Strike for the Cretan isle; and here thou art!
'Too gentle Hermes, hast thou found the maid?
Whereat the star of Lethe not delay'd
His rosy eloquence, and thus inquired:
'Thou smooth-lipp'd serpent, surely high inspired!
'Thou beauteous wreath, with melancholy eyes,
'Possess whatever bliss thou canst devise,
'Telling me only where my nymph is fled,—
'Where she doth breathe!' 'Bright planet, thou hast said,'
Return'd the snake, 'but seal with oaths, fair God!
'I swear,' said Hermes, 'by my serpent rod,
'And by thine eyes, and by thy starry crown!'
Light flew his earnest words, among the blossoms blown.
Then thus again the brilliance feminine:
'Too frail of heart! for this lost nymph of thine,
'Free as the air, invisibly, she strays
'About these thornless wilds; her pleasant days
'She tastes unseen; unseen her nimble feet
'Leave traces in the grass and flowers sweet;
'From weary tendrils, and bow'd branches green,
'She plucks the fruit unseen, she bathes unseen:
'And by my power is her beauty veil'd
'To keep it unaffronted, unassail'd
'By the love-glances of unlovely eyes,
'Of Satyrs, Fauns, and blear'd Silenus' sighs.
'Pale grew her immortality, for woe
'Of all these lovers, and she grieved so
'I took compassion on her, bade her steep
'Her hair in weird syrops, that would keep
'Her loveliness invisible, yet free
'To wander as she loves, in liberty.
'Thou shalt behold her, Hermes, thou alone,
'If thou wilt, as thou swearest, grant my boon!'
Then, once again, the charmed God began
An oath, and through the serpent's ears it ran
Warm, tremulous, devout, psalterian.
Ravish'd, she lifted her Circean head,
Blush'd a live damask, and swift-lipping said,
'I was a woman, let me have once more

'A woman's shape, and charming as before.
'I love a youth of Corinth—O the bliss!
'Give me my woman's form, and place me where he is.
'Stoop, Hermes, let me breathe upon thy brow,
'And thou shalt see thy sweet nymph even now.'
The God on half-shut feathers sank serene,
She breath'd upon his eyes, and swift was seen
Of both the guarded nymph near-smiling on the green.
It was no dream; or say a dream it was,
Real are the dreams of Gods, and smoothly pass
Their pleasures in a long immortal dream.
One warm, flush'd moment, hovering, it might seem
Dash'd by the wood-nymph's beauty, so he burn'd;
Then, lightning on the printless verdure, turn'd
To the swoon'd serpent, and with languid arm,
Delicate, put to proof the lythe Caducean charm.
So done, upon the nymph his eyes he bent
Full of adoring tears and blandishment,
And towards her stept: she, like a moon in wane,
Faded before him, cower'd, nor could restrain
Her fearful sobs, self-folding like a flower
That faints into itself at evening hour:
But the God fostering her chilled hand,
She felt the warmth, her eyelids open'd bland,
And, like new flowers at morning song of bees,
Bloom'd, and gave up her honey to the lees.
Into the green-recessed woods they flew;
Nor grew they pale, as mortal lovers do.

Left to herself, the serpent now began
To change; her elfin blood in madness ran,
Her mouth foam'd, and the grass, therewith besprent,
Wither'd at dew so sweet and virulent;
Her eyes in torture fix'd, and anguish drear,
Hot, glaz'd, and wide, with lid-lashes all sear,
Flash'd phosphor and sharp sparks, without one cooling tear.
The colours all inflam'd throughout her train,
She writh'd about, convuls'd with scarlet pain:
A deep volcanian yellow took the place
Of all her milder-mooned body's grace;
And, as the lava ravishes the mead,
Spoilt all her silver mail, and golden brede,

Made gloom of all her frecklings, streaks and bars,
Eclips'd her crescents, and lick'd up her stars:
So that, in moments few, she was undrest
Of all her sapphires, greens, and amethyst,
And rubious-argent: of all these bereft,
Nothing but pain and ugliness were left.
Still shone her crown; that vanish'd, also she
Melted and disappear'd as suddenly;
And in the air, her new voice luting soft,
Cried, 'Lycius! gentle Lycius!'—Borne aloft
With the bright mists about the mountains hoar
These words dissolv'd: Crete's forests heard no more.

Wither fled Lamia, now a lady bright,
A full-born beauty new and exquisite?
She fled into that valley they pass o'er
Who go to Corinth from Cenchreas' shore;
And rested at the foot of those wild hills,
The rugged founts of the Peræan rills,
And of that other ridge whose barren back
Stretches, with all its mist and cloudy rack,
South-westward to Cleone. There she stood
About a young bird's flutter from a wood,
Fair, on a sloping green of mossy tread,
By a clear pool, wherein she passioned
To see herself escap'd from so sore ills,
While her robes flaunted with the daffodils.

Ah, happy Lycius!—for she was a maid
More beautiful than ever twisted braid,
Or sigh'd, or blush'd, or on spring-flowered lea
Spread a green kirtle to the minstrelsy:
A virgin purest lipp'd, yet in the lore
Of love deep learned to the red heart's core:
Not one hour old, yet of scintial brain
To unperplex bliss from its neighbour pain;
Define their pettish limits, and estrange
Their points of contact, and swift counterchange;
Intrigue with the specious chaos, and dispart
Its most ambiguous atoms with sure art;
As though in Cupid's college she had spent
Sweet days a lovely graduate, still unshent,
And kept his rosy terms in idle languishment.

Why this fair creature chose so fairily
By the wayside to linger, we shall see;
But first 'tis fit to tell how she could muse
And dream, when in the serpent prison-house,
Of all she list, strange or magnificent:
How, ever, where she will'd, her spirit went;
Whether to faint Elysium, or where
Down through tress-lifting waves the Nereids fair
Wind into Thetis' bower by many a pearly stair;
Or where God Bacchus drains his cups divine,
Stretch'd out, at ease, beneath a glutinous pine;
Or where in Pluto's gardens palatine
Mulciber's columns gleam in far piazzian line.
And sometimes into cities she would send
Her dream, with feast and rioting to blend;
And once, while among mortals dreaming thus,
She saw the young Corinthian Lycius
Charioting foremost in the envious race,
Like a young Jove with calm uneager face,
And fell into a swooning love of him.
Now on the moth-time of that evening dim
He would return that way, as well she knew,
To Corinth from the shore; for freshly blew
The eastern soft wind, and his galley now
Grated the quaystones with her brazen prow
In port Cenchreas, from Egina isle
Fresh anchor'd; whither he had been awhile
To sacrifice to Jove, whose temple there
Waits with high marble doors for blood and incense rare.
Jove heard his vows, and better'd his desire;
For by some freakful chance he made retire
From his companions, and set forth to walk,
Perhaps grown wearied of their Corinth talk:
Over the solitary hills he fared,
Thoughtless at first, but ere eve's star appeared
His phantasy was lost, where reason fades,
In the calm'd twilight of Platonic shades.
Lamia beheld him coming, near, more near—
Close to her passing, in indifference drear,
His silent sandals swept the mossy green;
So neighbour'd to him, and yet so unseen
She stood: he pass'd, shut up in mysteries,

His mind wrapp'd like his mantle, while her eyes
Follow'd his steps, and her neck regal white
Turn'd—syllabling thus, 'Ah, Lycius bright,
'And will you leave me on the hills alone?
'Lycius, look back! and be some pity shown.'
He did; not with cold wonder fearingly,
But Orpheus-like at an Eurydice;
For so delicious were the words she sung,
It seem'd he had lov'd them a whole summer long:
And soon his eyes had drunk her beauty up,
Leaving no drop in the bewildering cup,
And still the cup was full,—while he, afraid
Lest she should vanish ere his lip had paid
Due adoration, thus began to adore;
Her soft look growing coy, she saw his chain so sure
'Leave thee alone! Look back! Ah, Goddess, see
'Whether my eyes can ever turn from thee!
'For pity do not this sad heart belie—
'Even as thou vanishest so I shall die.
'Stay! though a Naiad of the rivers, stay!
'To thy far wishes will thy streams obey:
'Stay! though the greenest woods be thy domain,
'Alone they can drink up the morning rain:
'Though a descended Pleiad, will not one
'Of thine harmonious sisters keep in tune
'Thy spheres, and as thy silver proxy shine?
'So sweetly to these ravish'd ears of mine
'Came thy sweet greeting, that if thou shouldst fade
'Thy memory will waste me to a shade:—
'For pity do not melt!'—'If I should stay,'
Said Lamia, 'here, upon this floor of clay,
'And pain my steps upon these flowers too rough,
'What canst thou say or do of charm enough
'To dull the nice remembrance of my home?
'Thou canst not ask me with thee here to roam
'Over these hills and vales, where no joy is,—
'Empty of immortality and bliss!
'Thou art a scholar, Lycius, and must know
'That finer spirits cannot breathe below
'In human climes, and live: Alas! poor youth,
'What taste of purer air hast thou to soothe
'My essence? What serener palaces,

'Where I may all my many senses please,
'And by mysterious sleights a hundred thirsts appease?
'It cannot be—Adieu!' So said, she rose
Tiptoe with white arms spread. He, sick to lose
The amorous promise of her lone complain,
Swoon'd, murmuring of love, and pale with pain.
The cruel lady, without any show
Of sorrow for her tender favourite's woe,
But rather, if her eyes could brighter be,
With brighter eyes and slow amenity,
Put her new lips to his, and gave afresh
The life she had so tangled in her mesh:
And as he from one trance was wakening
Into another, she began to sing,
Happy in beauty, life, and love, and every thing,
A song of love, too sweet for earthly lyres,
While, like held breath, the stars drew in their panting fires.
And then she whisper'd in such trembling tone,
As those who, safe together met alone
For the first time through many anguish'd days,
Use other speech than looks; bidding him raise
His drooping head, and clear his soul of doubt,
For that she was a woman, and without
Any more subtle fluid in her veins
Than throbbing blood, and that the self-same pains
Inhabited her frail-strung heart as his.
And next she wonder'd how his eyes could miss
Her face so long in Corinth, where, she said,
She dwelt but half retir'd, and there had led
Days happy as the gold coin could invent
Without the aid of love; yet in content
Till she saw him, as once she pass'd him by,
Where 'gainst a column he leant thoughtfully
At Venus' temple porch, 'mid baskets heap'd
Of amorous herbs and flowers, newly reap'd
Late on that eve, as 'twas the night before
The Adonian feast; whereof she saw no more,
But wept alone those days, for why should she adore?
Lycius from death awoke into amaze,
To see her still, and singing so sweet lays;
Then from amaze into delight he fell
To hear her whisper woman's lore so well;

And every word she spake entic'd him on
To unperplex'd delight and pleasure known.
Let the mad poets say whate'er they please
Of the sweets of Fairies, Peris, Goddesses,
There is not such a treat among them all,
Haunters of cavern, lake, and waterfall,
As a real woman, lineal indeed
From Pyrrha's pebbles or old Adam's seed.
Thus gentle Lamia judg'd, and judg'd aright,
That Lycius could not love in half a fright,
So threw the goddess off, and won his heart
More pleasantly by playing woman's part,
With no more awe than what her beauty gave,
That, while it smote, still guaranteed to save.
Lycius to all made eloquent reply,
Marrying to very word a twinborn sigh;
And last, pointing to Corinth, ask'd her sweet,
If 'twas too far that night for her soft feet.
The way was short, for Lamia's eagerness
Made, by a spell, the triple league decrease
To a few paces; not at all surmised
By blinded Lycius, so in her comprized.
They pass'd the city gates, he knew not how,
So noiseless, and he never thought to know.

As men talk in a dream, so Corinth all,
Throughout her palaces imperial,
And all her populous streets and temples lewd,
Mutter'd, like tempest in the distance brew'd,
To the wide-spreaded night above her towers.
Men, women, rich and poor, in the cool hours,
Shuffled their sandals o'er the pavement white,
Companion'd or alone; while many a light
Flared, here and there, from wealthy festivals,
And threw their moving shadows on the walls,
Or found them cluster'd in the corniced shade
Of some arch'd temple door, or dusky colonnade.

Muffling his face, of greeting friends in fear,
Her fingers he press'd hard, as one came near
With curl'd gray beard, sharp eyes, and smooth bald crown,
Slow-stepp'd, and robed in philosophic gown:

Lycius shrank closer, as they met and past,
 Into his mantle, adding wings to haste,
 While hurried Lamia trembled: 'Ah,' said he,
 'Why do you shudder, love, so ruefully?
 'Why does your tender palm dissolve in dew?'—
 'I'm wearied,' said fair Lamia: 'tell me who
 'Is that old man? I cannot bring to mind
 'His features:—Lycius! wherefore did you blind
 'Yourself from his quick eyes?' Lycius replied,
 "'Tis Apollonius sage, my trusty guide
 'And good instructor; but to-night he seems
 'The ghost of folly haunting my sweet dreams.'

While yet he spake they had arrived before
 A pillar'd porch, with lofty portal door,
 Where hung a silver lamp, whose phosphor glow
 Reflected in the slabbed steps below,
 Mild as a star in water; for so new,
 And so unsullied was the marble hue,
 So through the crystal polish, liquid fine,
 Ran the dark veins, that none but feet divine
 Could e'er have touch'd there. Sounds Æolian
 Breath'd from the hinges, as the ample span
 Of the wide doors disclos'd a place unknown
 Some time to any, but those two alone,
 And a few Persian mutes, who that same year
 Were seen about the markets: none knew where
 They could inhabit; the most curious
 Were foil'd, who watch'd to trace them to their house:
 And but the flutter-winged verse must tell
 For truth's sake, what woe afterwards befel,
 'Twould humour many a heart to leave them thus,
 Shut from the busy world of more incredulous.

PART TWO

LOVE in a hut, with water and a crust,
 Is—Love, forgive us!—cinders, ashes, dust;
 Love in a palace is perhaps at last
 More grievous torment than a hermit's fast:—
 That is a doubtful tale from faery land,
 Hard for the non-elect to understand.

Had Lycius liv'd to hand his story down,
He might have given the moral a fresh frown,
Or clench'd it quite: but too short was their bliss
To breed distrust and hate, that make the soft voice hiss.
Besides, there, nightly, with terrific glare,
Love, jealous grown of so complete a pair,
Hover'd and buzz'd his wings, with fearful roar,
Above the lintel of their chamber door,
And down the passage cast a glow upon the floor.

For all this came a ruin: side by side
They were enthroned, in the even tide,
Upon a couch, near to a curtaining
Whose airy texture, from a golden string,
Floated into the room, and let appear
Unveil'd the summer heaven, blue and clear,
Betwixt two marble shafts:—there they reposed,
Where use had made it sweet, with eyelids closed,
Saving a tythe which love still open kept,
That they might see each other while they almost slept;
When from the slope side of a suburb hill,
Deafening the swallow's twitter, came a thrill
Of trumpets—Lycius started—the sounds fled,
But left a thought, a buzzing in his head.
For the first time, since first he harbour'd in
That purple-lined palace of sweet sin,
His spirit pass'd beyond its golden bourn
Into the noisy world almost forsworn.
The lady, ever watchful, penetrant,
Saw this with pain, so arguing a want
Of something more, more than her empery
Of joys; and she began to moan and sigh
Because he mused beyond her, knowing well
That but a moment's thought is passion's passing bell.
'Why do you sigh, fair creature?' whisper'd he:
'Why do you think?' return'd she tenderly:
'You have deserted me;—where am I now?
'Not in your heart while care weighs on your brow:
'No, no, you have dismiss'd me; and I go
'From your breast houseless: ay, it must be so.'
He answer'd, bending to her open eyes,
Where he was mirror'd small in paradise,

'My silver planet, both of eve and morn!
'Why will you plead yourself so sad forlorn,
'While I am striving how to fill my heart
'With deeper crimson, and a double smart?
'How to entangle, trammel up and snare
'Your soul in mine, and labyrinth you there
'Like the hid scent in an unbudded rose?
'Ay, a sweet kiss—you see your mighty woes.
'My thoughts! shall I unveil them? Listen then!
'What mortal hath a prize, that other men
'May be confounded and abash'd withal,
'But lets it sometimes pace abroad majestic,
'And triumph, as in thee I should rejoice
'Amid the hoarse alarm of Corinth's voice.

'Let my foes choke, and my friends shout afar,
'While through the thronged streets your bridal car
'Wheels round its dazzling spokes,'—The lady's cheek
Trembled; she nothing said, but, pale and meek,
Arose and knelt before him, wept a rain
Of sorrows at his words; at last with pain
Beseeching him, the while his hand she wrung,
To change his purpose. He thereat was stung,
Perverse, with stronger fancy to reclaim
Her wild and timid nature to his aim:
Besides, for all his love, in self despite
Against his better self, he took delight
Luxurious in her sorrows, soft and new.
His passion, cruel grown, took on a hue
Fierce and sanguineous as 'twas possible
In one whose brow had no dark veins to swell.
Fine was the mitigated fury, like
Apollo's presence when in act to strike
The serpent—Ha, the serpent! certes, she
Was none. She burnt, she lov'd the tyranny,
And, all subdued, consented to the hour
When to the bridal he should lead his paramour.
Whispering in midnight silence, said the youth,
'Sure some sweet name thou hast, though, by my truth,
'I have not ask'd it, ever thinking thee
'Not mortal, but of heavenly progeny,
'As still I do. Hast any mortal name,

'Fit appellation for this dazzling frame?
'Or friends or kinsfolk on the citied earth,
'To share our marriage feast and nuptial mirth?'
'I have no friends,' said Lamia, 'no, not one;
'My presence in wide Corinth hardly known:
'My parents' bones are in their dusty urns
'Sepulchred, where no kindled incense burns,
'Seeing all their luckless race are dead, save me,
'And I neglect the holy rite for thee.
'Even as you list invite your many guests;
'But if, as now it seems, your vision rests
'With any pleasure on me, do not bid
'Old Apollonius—from him keep me hid.'
Lycius, perplex'd at words so blind and blank,
Made close inquiry; from whose touch she shrank,
Feigning a sleep; and he to the dull shade
Of deep sleep in a moment was betray'd.

It was the custom then to bring away
The bride from home at blushing shut of day,
Veil'd, in a chariot, heralded along
By strewn flowers, torches, and a marriage song,
With other pageants: but this fair unknown
Had not a friend. So being left alone,
(Lycius was gone to summon all his kin)
And knowing surely she could never win
His foolish heart from its mad pompousness,
She set herself, high-thoughted, how to dress
The misery in fit magnificence.
She did so, but 'tis doubtful how and whence
Came, and who were her subtle servitors.
About the halls, and to and from the doors,
There was a noise of wings, till in short space
The glowing banquet-room shone with wide-arched grace.
A haunting music, sole perhaps and lone
Supportress of the faery-roof, made moan
Throughout, as fearful the whole charm might fade.
Fresh carved cedar, mimicking a glade
Of palm and plantain, met from either side,
High in the midst, in honour of the bride:
Two palms and then two plantains, and so on,
From either side their stems branch'd one to one

All down the aisled place; and beneath all
There ran a stream of lamps straight on from wall to wall.
So canopied, lay an untasted feast
Teeming with odours. Lamia, regal drest,
Silently paced about, and as she went,
In pale contented sort of discontent,
Mission'd her viewless servants to enrich
The fretted splendour of each nook and niche.
Between the tree-stems, marbled plain at first,
Came jasper pannels; then, anon, there burst
Forth creeping imagery of slighter trees,
And with the larger wove in small intricacies.
Approving all, she faded at self-will,
And shut the chamber up, close, hush'd and still,
Complete and ready for the revels rude,
When dreadful guests would come to spoil her solitude.

The day appear'd, and all the gossip rout.
O senseless Lycius! Madman! wherefore flout
The silent-blessing fate, warm cloister'd hours,
And show to common eyes these secret bowers?
The herd approach'd; each guest, with busy brain,
Arriving at the portal, gaz'd amain,
And enter'd marveling: for they knew the street,
Remember'd it from childhood all complete
Without a gap, yet ne'er before had seen
That royal porch, that high-built fair demesne;
So in they hurried all, maz'd, curious and keen:
Save one, who look'd thereon with eye severe,
And with calm-planted steps walk'd in austere;
'Twas Apollonius: something too he laugh'd,
As though some knotty problem, that had daft
His patient thought, had now begun to thaw,
And solve and melt:—'twas just as he foresaw.

He met within the murmurous vestibule
His young disciple. 'Tis no common rule,
'Lycius,' said he, 'for uninvited guest
'To force himself upon you, and infest
'With an unbidden presence the bright throng
'Of younger friends; yet must I do this wrong,
'And you forgive me.' Lycius blush'd, and led

The old man through the inner doors broad-spread;
With reconciling words and courteous mien
Turning into sweet milk the sophists' spleen.

Of wealthy lustre was the banquet-room.
Fill'd with pervading brilliance and perfume:
Before each lucid pannel fuming stood
A censer fed with myrrh and spiced wood,
Each by a sacred tripod held aloft,
Whose slender feet wide-swerv'd upon the soft
Wool-woofed carpets: fifty wreaths of smoke
From fifty censers their light voyage took
To the high roof, still mimick'd as they rose
Along the mirror'd walls by twin-clouds odorous.
Twelve sphered tables, by silk seats insphered,
High as the level of a man's breast rear'd
On libbard's paws, upheld the heavy gold
Of cups and goblets, and the store thrice told
Of Ceres' horn, and, in huge vessels, wine
Come from the gloomy tun with merry shine.
Thus loaded with a feast the tables stood,
Each shrining in the midst the image of a God.

When in an antichamber every guest
Had felt the cold full sponge to pleasure press'd,
By minist'ring slaves, upon his hands and feet,
And fragrant oils with ceremony meet
Pour'd on his hair, they all mov'd to the feast
In white robes, and themselves in order placed
Around the silken couches, wondering
Whence all this mighty cost and blaze of wealth could spring.

Soft went the music the soft air along,
While fluent Greek a vowel'd undersong
Kept up among the guests, discoursing low
At first, for scarcely was the wine at flow;
But when the happy vintage touch'd their brains,
Louder they talk, and louder come the strains
Of powerful instruments:—the gorgeous dyes,
The space, the splendour of the draperies,
The roof of awful richness, nectarous cheer,
Beautiful slaves, and Lamia's self, appear,

Now, when the wine has done its rosy deed,
And every soul from human trammels freed,
No more so strange; for merry wine, sweet wine,
Will make Elysian shades not too fair, too divine.
Soon was God Bacchus at meridian height;
Flush'd were their cheeks, and bright eyes double bright:
Garlands of every green, and every scent
From vales deflower'd; or forest-trees branch-rent,
In baskets of bright osier'd gold were brought
High as the handles heap'd, to suit the thought
Of every guest; that each, as he did please,
Might fancy-fit his brows, silk-pillow'd at his ease.

What wreath for Lamia? What for Lycius?
What for the sage, old Apollonius?
Upon her aching forehead be there hung
The leaves of willow and of adder's tongue;
And for the youth, quick, let us strip for him
The thyrsus, that his watching eyes may swim
Into forgetfulness; and, for the sage,
Let spear-grass and the spiteful thistle wage
War on his temples. Do not all charms fly
At the mere touch of cold philosophy?
There was an awful rainbow once in heaven:
We know her woof, her texture; she is given
In the dull catalogue of common things.
Philosophy will clip an Angel's wings,
Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,
Empty the haunted air, and gnomed mine—
Unweave a rainbow, as it erewhile made
The tender-person'd Lamia melt into a shade,

By her glad Lycius sitting, in chief place,
Scarce saw in all the room another face,
Till, checking his love trance, a cup he took
Full brimm'd, and opposite sent forth a look
'Cross the broad table, to beseech a glance
From his old teacher's wrinkled countenance,
And pledge him. The bald-head philosopher
Had fix'd his eye, without a twinkle or stir
Full on the alarmed beauty of the bride,
Brow-beating her fair form, and troubling her sweet pride.

Lycius then press'd her hand, with devout touch,
As pale it lay upon the rosy couch:
'Twas icy, and the cold ran through his veins;
Then sudden it grew hot, and all the pains
Of an unnatural heat shot to his heart.
'Lamia, what means this? Wherefore dost thou start?
'Know'st thou that man?' Poor Lamia answer'd not.
He gaz'd into her eyes, and not a jot
Own'd they the lovelorn piteous appeal:
More, more he gaz'd: his human senses reel:
Some hungry spell that loveliness absorbs;
There was no recognition in those orbs.
'Lamia!' he cried—and no soft-toned reply.
The many heard, and the loud revelry
Grew hush; the stately music no more breathes;
The myrtle sicken'd in a thousand wreaths.
By faint degrees, voice, lute, and pleasure ceased;
A deadly silence step by step increased,
Until it seem'd a horrid presence there,
And not a man but felt the terror in his hair.
'Lamia!' he shriek'd; and nothing but the shriek
With its sad echo did the silence break.
'Begone, foul dream!' he cried, gazing again
In the bride's face, where now no azure vein
Wander'd on fair-spaced temples; no soft bloom
Misted the cheek; no passion to illumine
The deep-recessed vision:—all was blight;
Lamia, no longer fair, there sat a deadly white.
'Shut, shut those juggling eyes, thou ruthless man!
'Turn them aside, wretch! or the righteous ban
'Of all the Gods, whose dreadful images
'Here represent their shadowy presences,
'May pierce them on the sudden with the thorn
'Of painful blindness; leaving thee forlorn,
'In trembling dotage to the feeblest fright
'Of conscience, for their long offended might,
'For all thine impious proud-heart sophistries,
'Unlawful magic, and enticing lies.
'Corinthians! look upon that gray-beard wretch!
'Mark how, possess'd, his lashless eyelids stretch
'Around his demon eyes! Corinthians, see!
'My sweet bride withers at their potency.

'Fool!' said the sophist, in an under-tone
 Gruff with contempt; which a death-nighing moan
 From Lycius answer'd, as heart-struck and lost,
 He sank supine beside the aching ghost.
 'Fool! Fool!' repeated he, while his eyes still
 Relented not, nor mov'd; 'from every ill
 'Of life have I preserv'd thee to this day,
 'And shall I see thee made a serpent's prey?'
 Then Lamia breath'd death breath; the sophist's eye,
 Like a sharp spear, went through her utterly,
 Keen, cruel, perçant, stinging: she, as well
 As her weak hand could any meaning tell,
 Motion'd him to be silent; vainly so,
 He look'd and look'd again a level—No!
 'A Serpent!' echoed he; no sooner said,
 Than with a frightful scream she vanished:
 And Lycius' arms were empty of delight,
 As were his limbs of life, from that same night.
 On the high couch he lay!—his friends came round—
 Supported him—no pulse, or breath they found,
 And, in its marriage robe, the heavy body wound.*

* 'Philostratus, in his fourth book "*de Vita Apollonii*," hath a memorable instance in this kind, which I may not omit, of one Menippus Lycius, a young man twenty-five years of age, that going betwixt Cenchreas and Corinth, met such a phantasm in the habit of a fair gentlewoman, which taking him by the hand, carried him home to her house, in the suburbs of Corinth, and told him she was a Phœnician by birth, and if he would tarry with her, he should hear her sing and play, and drink such wine as never any drank, and no man should molest him; but she, being fair and lovely, would live and die with him, that was fair and lovely to behold. The young man, a philosopher, otherwise staid and discreet, able to moderate his passions, though not this of love, tarried with her a while to his great content, and at last married her, to whose wedding, amongst other guests, came Apollonius; who, by some probable conjectures, found her out to be a serpent, a lamia; and that all her furniture was, like Tantalus' gold, described by Homer, no substance but mere illusions. When she saw herself descried, she wept, and desired Apollonius to be silent, but he would not be moved, and thereupon she, plate, house, and all that was in it, vanished in an instant: many thousands took notice of this fact, for it was done in the midst of Greece.'

Burton's "*Anatomy of Melancholy*." Part 3. Sect. 2.
 Memb. 1. Subs. 1.

Isabella, or The Pot of Basil

A STORY FROM BOCCACCIO

THIS tale was immediately honoured by Charles Lamb with praise from the heart, but in 1853 Matthew Arnold, seeking to bring home to modern poets the error of their ways, pitched on it for criticism something in the Apollonius vein. 'The poem of *Isabella* is a perfect treasure-house of graceful and felicitous words and images: almost in every stanza there occurs one of those vivid and picturesque turns of expression, by which the object is made to flash upon the eye of the mind, and which thrill the reader with a sudden delight. This one short poem contains, perhaps, a greater number of happy single expressions which one could quote than all the extant tragedies of Sophocles. But the action, the story? The action in itself is an excellent one; but so feebly is it conceived by the Poet, so loosely constructed, that the effect produced by it, in and for itself, is absolutely null. Let the reader, after he has finished the poem of Keats, turn to the same story in the *Decameron*: he will then feel how pregnant and interesting the same action has become in the hands of a great artist, who above all things delineates his object; who subordinates expression to that which it is designed to express.'

Let the reader, however, turn to the same story delivered by a friend of Keats, who wrote as Barry Cornwall. It was published in 1820 as *A Sicilian Story*. It shows by comparison how purposeful Keats was in his version, how intensely he conceived the love and misery of *Isabella*, how he stuck to the primitive things instead of appealing to modern refinement,—apart from the force of his actual expressions.

'Without any similitude, the idea of place is sometimes presented in a very forcible manner by a change of time. The line in which Keats hints at an event which has yet to take place, as if it had already taken place, must be well known:—

*So the two brothers and their murdered man
Rode past fair Florence.*

This, however, is but a skilful adaptation of a very common phrase, "We be all dead men." (E. S. DALLAS, *Poetics*, 1852).

FAIR Isabel, poor simple Isabel!
Lorenzo, a young palmer in Love's eye!
They could not in the self-same mansion dwell
Without some stir of heart, some malady;
They could not sit at meals but feel how well
It soothed each to be the other by;
They could not, sure, beneath the same roof sleep
But to each other dream, and nightly weep.

With every morn their love grew tenderer,
With every eve deeper and tenderer still;
He might not in house, field, or garden stir,
But her full shape would all his seeing fill;
And his continual voice was pleasanter
To her, than noise of trees or hidden rill;
Her lute-string gave an echo of his name,
She spoilt her half-done broidery with the same.

He knew whose gentle hand was at the latch,
Before the door had given her to his eyes;
And from her chamber-window he would catch
Her beauty farther than the falcon spies;
And constant as her vespers would he watch,
Because her face was turn'd to the same skies;
And with sick longing all the night outwear,
To hear her morning-step upon the stair.

A whole long month of May in this sad plight
Made their cheeks paler by the break of June:
'To-morrow will I bow to my delight,
'To-morrow will I ask my lady's boon.'—
'O may I never see another night,
'Lorenzo, if thy lips breathe not love's tune.'—
So spake they to their pillows; but, alas,
Honeyless days and days did he let pass;

Until sweet Isabella's untouch'd cheek
Fell sick within the rose's just domain,
Fell thin as a young mother's, who doth seek
By every lull to cool her infant's pain:
'How ill she is,' said he, 'I may not speak,
'And yet I will, and tell my love all plain:
'If looks speak love-laws, I will drink her tears,
'And at the least 'twill startle off her cares.'

So said he one fair morning, and all day
His heart beat awfully against his side;
And to his heart he inwardly did pray
For power to speak; but still the ruddy tide
Stifled his voice, and puls'd resolve away—
Fever'd his high conceit of such a bride,

Yet brought him to the meekness of a child:
Alas! when passion is both meek and wild!

So once more he had wak'd and anguished
A dreary night of love and misery,
If Isabel's quick eye had not been wed
To every symbol on his forehead high;
She saw it waxing very pale and dead,
And straight all flush'd; so, lisped tenderly
'Lorenzo!'—here she ceas'd her timid quest,
But in her tone and look he read the rest.

'O Isabella, I can half perceive
'That I may speak my grief into thine ear;
'If thou didst ever any thing believe,
'Believe how I love thee, believe how near
'My soul is to its doom: I would not grieve
'Thy hand by unwelcome pressing, would not fear
'Thine eyes by gazing; but I cannot live
'Another night, and not my passion thrive.

'Love! thou art leading me from wintry cold,
'Lady! thou leadest me to summer clime,
'And I must taste the blossoms that unfold
'In its ripe warmth this gracious morning time.'
So said, his erewhile timid lips grew bold,
And poesied with hers in dewy rhyme:
Great bliss was with them, and great happiness
Grew, like a lusty flower in June's caress.

Parting they seem'd to tread upon the air,
Twin roses by the zephyr blown apart
Only to meet again more close, and share
The inward fragrance of each other's heart.
She, to her chamber gone, a ditty fair
Sang, of delicious love and honey'd dart;
He with light steps went up a western hill,
And bade the sun farewell, and joy'd his fill.

All close they met again, before the dusk
Had taken from the stars its pleasant veil,
All close they met, all eves, before the dusk

Had taken from the stars its pleasant veil,
Close in a bower of hyacinth and musk,
Unknown of any, free from whispering tale.
Ah! better had it been for ever so,
Than idle ears should pleasure in their woe.

Were they unhappy then?—It cannot be—
Too many tears for lovers have been shed,
Too many sighs give we to them in fee,
Too much of pity after they are dead,
Too many doleful stories do we see,
Whose matter in bright gold were best be read;
Except in such a page where Theseus' spouse
Over the pathless waves towards him bows.

But, for the general award of love,
The little sweet doth kill much bitterness;
Though Dido silent is in under-grove,
And Isabella's was a great distress,
Though young Lorenzo in warm Indian clove
Was not embalm'd, this truth is not the less
Even bees, the little almsmen of spring-bowers,
Know there is richest juice in poison-flowers.

With her two brothers this fair lady dwelt,
Enriched from ancestral merchandize,
And for them many a weary hand did swelt
In torched mines and noisy factories,
And many once proud-quiver'd loins did melt
In blood from stinging whip;—with hollow eyes
Many all day in dazzling river stood,
To take the rich-ored driftings of the flood.

For them the Ceylon diver held his breath,
And went all naked to the hungry shark;
For them his ears gush'd blood; for them in death
The seal on the cold ice with piteous bark
Lay full of darts; for them alone did seethe
A thousand men in troubles wide and dark:
Half-ignorant, they turn'd an easy wheel,
That set sharp racks at work, to pinch and peel.

Why were they proud? Because their marble founts
Gush'd with more pride than do a wretch's tears?—
Why were they proud? Because fair orange-mounts
Were of more soft ascent than lazar stairs?—
Why were they proud? Because red-lin'd accounts
Were richer than the songs of Grecian years?—
Why were they proud? again we ask aloud,
Why in the name of Glory were they proud?

Yet were these Florentines as self-retired
In hungry pride and gainful cowardice,
As two close Hebrews in that land inspired,
Paled in and vineyarded from beggar-spies
The hawks of ship-mast forests—the untired
And pannier'd mules for ducats and old lies—
Quick cat's-paws on the generous stray-away,—
Great wits in Spanish, Tuscan, and Malay.

How was it these same ledger-men could spy
Fair Isabella in her downy nest?
How could they find out in Lorenzo's eye
A straying from his toil? Hot Egypt's pest
Into their vision covetous and sly!
How could these money-bags see east and west?—
Yet so they did—and every dealer fair
Must see behind, as doth the hunted hare.

O eloquent and famed Boccaccio!
Of thee we now should ask forgiving boon,
And of thy spicy myrtles as they blow,
And of thy roses amorous of the moon,
And of thy lilies, that do paler grow
Now they can no more hear thy ghittern's tune,
For venturing syllables that ill beseem
The quiet glooms of such a piteous theme.

Grant thou a pardon here, and then the tale
Shall move on soberly, as it is meet;
There is no other crime, no mad assail
To make old prose in modern rhyme more sweet:
But it is done—succeed the verse or fail—
To honour thee, and thy gone spirit greet;

To stead thee as a verse in English tongue,
An echo of thee in the north-wind sung.

These brethren having found by many signs
What love Lorenzo for their sister had,
And how she lov'd him too, each unconfines
His bitter thoughts to other, well nigh mad
That he, the servant of their trade designs,
Should in their sister's love be blithe and glad,
When 'twas their plan to coax her by degrees
To some high noble and his olive-trees.

And many a jealous conference had they,
And many times they bit their lips alone,
Before they fix'd upon a surest way
To make the youngster for his crime atone;
And at the last, these men of cruel clay
Cut Mercy with a sharp knife to the bone;
For they resolved in some forest dim
To kill Lorenzo, and there bury him.

So on a pleasant morning, as he leant
Into the sun-rise, o'er the balustrade
Of the garden-terrace, towards him they bent
Their footing through the dews; and to him said,
'You seem there in the quiet of content,
'Lorenzo, and we are most loth to invade
'Calm speculation; but if you are wise,
'Bestride your steed while cold is in the skies.

'To-day we purpose, ay, this hour we mount
'To spur three leagues towards the Apennine;
'Come down, we pray thee, ere the hot sun count
'His dewy rosary on the eglantine.'
Lorenzo, courteously as he was wont,
Bow'd a fair greeting to these serpents' whine;
And went in haste, to get in readiness,
With belt, and spur, and bracing huntsman's dress.

And as he to the court-yard pass'd along,
Each third step did he pause, and listen'd oft
If he could hear his lady's matin-song,

Or the light whisper of her footstep soft;
And as he thus over his passion hung,
He heard a laugh full musical aloft;
When, looking up, he saw her features bright
Smile through an in-door lattice, all delight.

'Love, Isabel!' said he, 'I was in pain
'Lest I should miss to bid thee a good morrow
'Ah! what if I should lose thee, when so fain
'I am to stifle all the heavy sorrow
'Of a poor three hours' absence? but we'll gain
'Out of the amorous dark what day doth borrow.
'Good bye! I'll soon be back.'—'Good bye!' said she:—
And as he went she chanted merrily.

So the two brothers and their murder'd man
Rode past fair Florence, to where Arno's stream
Gurgles through straiten'd banks, and still doth fan
Itself with dancing bulrush, and the bream
Keeps head against the freshets. Sick and wan
The brothers' faces in the ford did seem,
Lorenzo's flush with love.—They pass'd the water
Into a forest quiet for the slaughter.

There was Lorenzo slain and buried in,
There in that forest did his great love cease;
Ah! when a soul doth thus its freedom win,
It aches in loneliness—is ill at peace
As the break-covert blood-hounds of such sin:
They dipp'd their swords in the water, and did tease
Their horses homeward, with convulsed spur,
Each richer by his being a murderer.

They told their sister how, with sudden speed,
Lorenzo had ta'en ship for foreign lands,
Because of some great urgency and need
In their affairs, requiring trusty hands.
Poor Girl! put on thy stifling widow's weed,
And 'scape at once from Hope's accursed bands;
To-day thou wilt not see him, nor to-morrow,
And the next day will be a day of sorrow.

She weeps alone for pleasures not to be;
Sorely she wept until the night came on,
And then, instead of love, O misery!
She brooded o'er the luxury alone:
His image in the dusk she seem'd to see,
And to the silence made a gentle moan,
Spreading her perfect arms upon the air,
And on her couch low murmuring 'Where? O where?'

But Selfishness, Love's cousin, held not long
Its fiery vigil in her single breast;
She fretted for the golden hour, and hung
Upon the time with feverish unrest—
Not long—for soon into her heart a throng
Of higher occupants, a richer zest,
Came tragic; passion not to be subdued,
And sorrow for her love in travels rude.

In the mid days of autumn, on their eves
The breath of Winter comes from far away,
And the sick west continually bereaves
Of some gold tinge, and plays a roundelay
Of death among the bushes and the leaves
To make all bare before he dares to stray
From his north cavern. So sweet Isabel
By gradual decay from beauty fell,

Because Lorenzo came not. Oftentimes
She ask'd her brothers, with an eye all pale,
Striving to be itself, what dungeon climes
Could keep him off so long? They spake a tale
Time after time, to quiet her. Their crimes
Came on them, like a smoke from Hinnom's vale;
And every night in dreams they groan'd aloud,
To see their sister in her snowy shroud.

And she had died in drowsy ignorance,
But for a thing more deadly dark than all;
It came like a fierce potion, drunk by chance,
Which saves a sick man from the feather'd pall
For some few gasping moments; like a lance,
Waking an Indian from his cloudy hall

With cruel pierce, and bringing him again
Sense of the gnawing fire at heart and brain.

It was a vision.—In the drowsy gloom,
The dull of midnight, at her couch's foot
Lorenzo stood, and wept: the forest tomb
Had marr'd his glossy hair which once could shoot
Lustre into the sun, and put cold doom
Upon his lips, and taken the soft lute
From his lorn voice, and past his loamed ears
Had made a miry channel for his tears.

Strange sound it was, when the pale shadow spake;
For there was striving, in its piteous tongue,
To speak as when on earth it was awake,
And Isabella on its music hung:
Languor there was in it, and tremulous shake,
As in a palsied Druid's harp unstrung;
And through it moan'd a ghostly under-song,
Like hoarse night-gusts sepulchral briars among.

Its eyes, though wild, were still all dewy bright
With love, and kept all phantom fear aloof
From the poor girl by magic of their light,
The while it did unthread the horrid woof
Of the late darken'd time,—the murderous spite
Of pride and avarice,—the dark pine roof
In the forest,—and the sodden turfed dell,
Where, without any word, from stabs he fell.

Saying moreover, 'Isabel, my sweet!
'Red whortle-berries droop above my head,
'And a large flint-stone weighs upon my feet;
'Around me beeches and high chestnuts shed
'Their leaves and prickly nuts; a sheep-fold bleat
'Comes from beyond the river to my bed:
'Go, shed one tear upon my heather-bloom,
'And it shall comfort me within the tomb.

'I am a shadow now, alas! alas!
'Upon the skirts of human-nature dwelling
'Alone: I chant alone the holy mass,

'While little sounds of life are round me knelling,
'And glossy bees at noon do fieldward pass,
'And many a chapel bell the hour is telling,
'Paining me through: those sounds grow strange to me,
'And thou art distant in Humanity.

'I know what was, I feel full well what is,
'And I should rage, if spirits could go mad;
'Though I forget the taste of earthly bliss,
'That paleness warms my grave, as though I had
'A Seraph chosen from the bright abyss
'To be my spouse: thy paleness makes me glad;
'Thy beauty grows upon me, and I feel
'A greater love through all my essence steal.'

The Spirit mourn'd 'Adieu!'—dissolv'd. and left
The atom darkness in a slow turmoil;
As when of healthful midnight sleep bereft,
Thinking on rugged hours and fruitless toil,
We put our eyes into a pillowy cleft,
And see the spangly gloom froth up and boil:
It made sad Isabella's eyelids ache,
And in the dawn she started up awake;

'Ha! ha!' said she, 'I knew not this hard life,
'I thought the worst was simple misery;
'I thought some Fate with pleasure or with strife
'Portion'd us—happy days, or else to die;
'But there is crime—a brother's bloody knife!
'Sweet Spirit, thou hast school'd my infancy:
'I'll visit thee for this, and kiss thine eyes,
'And greet thee morn and even in the skies.'

When the full morning came, she had devised
How she might secret to the forest hie;
How she might find the clay, so dearly prized,
And sing to it one latest lullaby;
How her short absence might be unsurmised,
While she the inmost of the dream would try.
Resolv'd, she took with her an aged nurse,
And went into that dismal forest-hearse.

See, as they creep along the river side,
How she doth whisper to that aged Dame,
And, after looking round the champaign wide,
Shows her a knife.—‘What feverous hectic flame
‘Burns in thee, child?—What good can thee betide,
‘That thou should’st smile again?’—The evening came.
And they had found Lorenzo’s earthy bed;
The flint was there, the berries at his head.

Who hath not loiter’d in a green church-yard,
And let his spirit, like a demon-mole,
Work through the clayey soil and gravel hard,
To see scull, coffin’d bones, and funeral stole;
Pitying each form that hungry Death hath marr’d,
And filling it once more with human soul?
Ah! this is holiday to what was felt
When Isabella by Lorenzo knelt.

She gaz’d into the fresh-thrown mould, as though
One glance did fully all its secrets tell;
Clearly she saw, as other eyes would know
Pale limbs at bottom of a crystal well;
Upon the murderous spot she seem’d to grow,
Like to a native lily of the dell:
Then with her knife, all sudden, she began
To dig more fervently than misers can.

Soon she turn’d up a soiled glove, whereon
Her silk had play’d in purple phantasies,
She kiss’d it with a lip more chill than stone,
And put it in her bosom, where it dries
And freezes utterly unto the bone
Those dainties made to still an infant’s cries:
Then ’gan she work again; nor stay’d her care,
But to throw back at times her veiling hair.

That old nurse stood beside her wondering,
Until her heart felt pity to the core
At sight of such a dismal labouring,
And so she kneeled, with her locks all hoar,
And put her lean hands to the horrid thing:
‘Three hours they labour’d at this travail sore;

At last they felt the kernel of the grave,
And Isabella did not stamp and rave.

Ah! wherefore all this wormy circumstance?
Why linger at the yawning tomb so long?
O for the gentleness of old Romance,
The simple plaining of a minstrel's song!
Fair reader, at the old tale take a glance,
For here, in truth, it doth not well belong
To speak:—O turn thee to the very tale,
And taste the music of that vision pale.

With duller steel than the Perséan sword
They cut away no formless monster's head,
But one, whose gentleness did well accord
With death, as life. The ancient harps have said,
Love never dies, but lives, immortal Lord:
If Love impersonate was ever dead,
Pale Isabella kiss'd it, and low moan'd.
'Twas love; cold,—dead indeed, but not dethroned.

In anxious secrecy they took it home,
And then the prize was all for Isabel:
She calm'd its wild hair with a golden comb,
And all around each eye's sepulchral cell
Pointed each fringed lash; the smeared loam
With tears, as chilly as a dripping well,
She drench'd away:—and still she comb'd, and kept
Sighing all day—and still she kiss'd, and wept.

Then in a silken scarf,—sweet with the dews
Of precious flowers pluck'd in Araby,
And divine liquids come with odorous ooze
Through the cold serpent-pipe refreshfully,—
She wrapp'd it up; and for its tomb did choose
A garden-pot, wherein she laid it by,
And cover'd it with mould, and o'er it set
Sweet Basil, which her tears kept ever wet.

And she forgot the stars, the moon, and sun,
And she forgot the blue above the trees,
And she forgot the dells where waters run,

And she forgot the chilly autumn breeze;
She had no knowledge when the day was done,
And the new morn she saw not: but in peace
Hung over her sweet Basil evermore,
And moisten'd it with tears unto the core.

And so she ever fed it with thin tears,
Whence thick, and green, and beautiful it grew,
So that it smelt more balmy than its peers
Of Basil-tufts in Florence; for it drew
Nurture besides, and life, from human fears,
From the fast mouldering head there shut from view:
So that the jewel, safely casketed,
Came forth, and in perfumed leafits spread.

O Melancholy, linger here awhile!
O Music, Music, breathe despondingly!
O Echo, Echo, from some sombre isle,
Unknown, Lethean, sigh to us—O sigh!
Spirits in grief, lift up your heads, and smile;
Lift up your heads, sweet Spirits, heavily,
And make a pale light in your cypress glooms,
Tinting with silver wan your marble tombs.

Moan hither, all ye syllables of woe,
From the deep throat of sad Melpomene
Through bronzed lyre in tragic order go,
And touch the strings into a mystery;
Sound mournfully upon the winds and low;
For simple Isabel is soon to be
Among the dead: She withers, like a palm
Cut by an Indian for its juicy balm.

O leave the palm to wither by itself;
Let not quick Winter chill its dying hour!—
It may not be—those Baälites of pelf,
Her brethren, noted the continual shower
From her dead eyes; and many a curious elf,
Among her kindred, wonder'd that such dower
Of youth and beauty should be thrown aside
By one mark'd out to be a Noble's bride.

And, furthermore, her brethren wonder'd much
Why she sat drooping by the Basil green,
And why it flourish'd, as by magic touch;
Greatly they wonder'd what the thing might mean:
They could not surely give belief, that such
A very nothing would have power to wean
Her from her own fair youth, and pleasures gay,
And even remembrance of her love's delay.

Therefore they watch'd a time when they might sift
This hidden whim; and long they watch'd in vain;
For seldom did she go to chapel-shrift,
And seldom felt she any hunger-pain;
And when she left, she hurried back, as swift
As bird on wing to breast its eggs again;
And, patient as a hen-bird, sat her there
Beside her Basil, weeping through her hair.

Yet they contriv'd to steal the Basil-pot,
And to examine it in secret place:
The thing was vile with green and livid spot,
And yet they knew it was Lorenzo's face:
The guerdon of their murder they had got,
And so left Florence in a moment's space,
Never to turn again.—Away they went,
With blood upon their heads, to banishment.

O Melancholy, turn thine eyes away!
O Music, Music, breathe despondingly!
O Echo, Echo, on some other day,
From isles Lethæan, sigh to us—O sigh!
Spirits of grief, sing not your 'Well-a-way!'
For Isabel, sweet Isabel, will die;
Will die a death too lone and incomplete,
Now they have ta'en away her Basil sweet.

Piteous she look'd on dead and senseless things,
Asking for her lost Basil amorously;
And with melodious chuckle in the strings
Of her lorn voice, she oftentimes would cry
After the Pilgrim in his wanderings,
To ask him where her Basil was; and why

Tw'as hid from her: 'For cruel 'tis,' said she,
'To steal my Basil-pot away from me.'

And so she pined, and so she died forlorn,
Imploring for her Basil to the last.
No heart was there in Florence but did mourn
In pity of her love, so overcast.
And a sad ditty of this story born
From mouth to mouth through all the country pass'd:
Still is the burthen sung—'O cruelty,
'To steal my Basil-pot away from me!'

The Eve of Saint Agnes

As William Cowper was given the hint of 'The Task' by Lady Austen, Keats was indebted to the beautiful Isabella Jones for the inducement to write on St. Agnes Eve (20 January). He took his opportunity to paint his imagination of the mediaeval world, as well as to tell a tale of bold and lucky love, with all the gusto he had. Some descriptive passages may lie outside the action, yet they fill the attention. It is largely on that account that Keats becomes the inspirer of the Pre-raphaelite painters whom he ought to have lived to befriend.

SAINT Agnes' Eve—Ah, bitter chill it was!
The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold;
The hare limp'd trembling through the frozen grass,
And silent was the flock in woolly fold:
Numb were the Beadsman's fingers, while he told
His rosary, and while his frosted breath,
Like pious incense from a censer old,
Seem'd taking flight for heaven, without a death,
Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his prayer he saith.

His prayer he saith, this patient, holy man;
Then takes his lamp, and riseth from his knees,
And back returneth, meagre, barefoot, wan,
Along the chapel aisle by slow degrees:
The sculptur'd dead, on each side, seem to freeze,
Emprison'd in black, purgatorial rails:
Knights, ladies, praying in dumb orat'ries,
He passeth by; and his weak spirit fails
To think how they may ache in icy hoods and mails.

Northward he turneth through a little door.
And scarce three steps, ere Music's golden tongue
Flatter'd to tears this aged man and poor;
But no—already had his deathbell rung;
The joys of all his life were said and sung:
His was harsh penance on St. Agnes' Eve:
Another way he went, and soon among
Rough ashes sat he for his soul's reprieve,
And all night kept awake, for sinners' sake to grieve.

That ancient Beadsman heard the prelude soft;
And so it chanc'd, for many a door was wide,
From hurry to and fro. Soon, up aloft,
The silver, snarling trumpets 'gan to chide:
The level chambers, ready with their pride,
Were glowing to receive a thousand guests:
The carved angels, ever eager-eyed,
Star'd, where upon their heads the cornice rests,
With hair blown back, and wings put cross-wise on their breasts.

At length burst in the argent revelry,
With plume, tiara, and all rich array,
Numerous as shadows haunting fairily
The brain, new stuff'd, in youth, with triumphs gay
Of old romance. These let us wish away,
And turn, sole-thoughted, to one Lady there,
Whose heart had brooded, all that wintry day,
On love, and wing'd St. Agnes' saintly care,
As she had heard old dames full many times declare.

They told her how, upon St. Agnes' Eve,
Young virgins might have visions of delight,
And soft adorings from their loves receive
Upon the honey'd middle of the night,
If ceremonies due they did aright;
As, supperless to bed they must retire,
And couch supine their beauties, lily white;
Nor look behind, nor sideways, but require
Of Heaven with upward eyes for all that they desire.

Full of this whim was thoughtful Madeline:
The music, yearning like a God in pain,

She scarcely heard: her maiden eyes divine,
Fix'd on the floor, saw many a sweeping train
Pass by—she heeded not at all: in vain
Came many a tiptoe, amorous cavalier,
And back retir'd; not cool'd by high disdain,
But she saw not: her heart was elsewhere:
She sigh'd for Agnes' dreams, the sweetest of the year.

She danc'd along with vague, regardless eyes,
Anxious her lips, her breathing quick and short:
The hallow'd hour was near at hand: she sighs
Amid the timbrels, and the throng'd resort
Of whisperers in anger, or in sport;
'Mid looks of love, defiance, hate, and scorn,
Hoodwink'd with faery fancy; all amorn,
Save to St. Agnes and her lambs unshorn,
And all the bliss to be before to-morrow morn.

So, purposing each moment to retire,
She linger'd still. Meantime, across the moors,
Had come young Porphyro, with heart on fire
For Madeline. Beside the portal doors,
Buttress'd from moonlight, stands he, and implores
All saints to give him sight of Madeline,
But for one moment in the tedious hours,
That he might gaze and worship all unseen;
Perchance speak, kneel, touch, kiss—in sooth such things have been.

He ventures in: let no buzz'd whisper tell:
All eyes be muffled, or a hundred swords
Will storm his heart, Love's fev'rous citadel:
For him, those chambers held barbarian hordes,
Hyena foemen, and hot-blooded lords,
Whose very dogs would execrations howl
Against his lineage: not one breast affords
Him any mercy, in that mansion foul,
Save one old beldame, weak in body and in soul.

Ah, happy chance! the aged creature came,
Shuffling along with ivory-headed wand,
To where he stood, hid from the torch's flame,
Behind a broad hall-pillar, far beyond

The sound of merriment and chorus bland:
He startled her, but soon she knew his face,
And grasp'd his fingers in her palsied hand,
Saying, 'Mercy, Porphyro! hie thee from this place:
'They are all here to-night, the whole blood-thirsty race!

'Get hence! get hence! there's dwarfish Hildebrand;
'He had a fever late, and in the fit
'He cursed thee and thine, both house and land:
'Then there's that old Lord Maurice, not a whit
'More tame for his gray hairs—Alas me! flit!
'Flit like a ghost away.'—'Ah, Gossip dear,
'We're safe enough; here in this arm-chair sit,
'And tell me how'—'Good Saints! not here, not here;
'Follow me, child, or else these stones will be thy bier.'

He follow'd through a lowly arched way,
Brushing the cobwebs with his lofty plume,
And as she mutter'd 'Well-a—well-a-day!'
He found him in a little moonlight room,
Pale, lattic'd, chill, and silent as a tomb.
'Now tell me where is Madeline,' said he,
'O tell me, Angela, by the holy loom
'Which none but secret sisterhood may see,
'When they St. Agnes' wool are weaving piously.'

'St. Agnes! Ah! it is St. Agnes' Eve—
'Yet men will murder upon holy days:
'Thou must hold water in a witch's sieve,
'And be liege-lord of all the Elves and Fays,
'To venture so: it fills me with amaze
'To see thee, Porphyro!—St. Agnes' Eve!
'God's help! my lady fair the conjuror plays
'This very night: good angels her deceive!
'But let me laugh awhile, I've mickle time to grieve.'

Feebly she laugheth in the languid moon,
While Porphyro upon her face doth look,
Like puzzled urchin on an aged crone
Who keepeth clos'd a wond'rous riddle-book,
As spectacl'd she sits in chimney nook.
But soon his eyes grew brilliant, when she told

His lady's purpose; and he scarce could brook
Tears, at the thought of those enchantments cold
And Madeline asleep in lap of legends old.

Sudden a thought came like a full-blown rose,
Flushing his brow, and in his pained heart
Made purple riot: then doth he propose
A stratagem, that makes the beldame start:
'A cruel man and impious thou art:
'Sweet lady, let her pray, and sleep, and dream
'Alone with her good angels, far apart
'From wicked men like thee. Go, go!—I deem
'Thou canst not surely be the same that thou didst seem.'

'I will not harm her, by all saints I swear,'
Quoth Porphyro: 'O may I ne'er find grace
'When my weak voice shall whisper its last prayer,
'If one of her soft ringlets I displace,
'Or look with ruffian passion in her face:
'Good Angela, believe me by these tears;
'Or I will, even in a moment's space,
'Awake, with horrid shout, my foemen's ears,
'And beard them, though they be more fang'd than wolves
and bears.'

'Ah! why wilt thou affright a feeble soul?
'A poor, weak, palsy-stricken, churchyard thing,
'Whose passing-bell may ere the midnight toll;
'Whose prayers for thee, each morn and evening,
'Were never miss'd.'—Thus plaining, doth she bring
A gentler speech from burning Porphyro;
So woful, and of such deep sorrowing,
That Angela gives promise she will do
Whatever he shall wish, betide her weal or woe.

Which was, to lead him, in close secrecy,
Even to Madeline's chamber, and there hide
Him in a closet, of such privacy
That he might see her beauty unespied,
And win perhaps that night a peerless bride,
While legion'd fairies pac'd the coverlet,
And pale enchantment held her sleepy-eyed.

Never on such a night have lovers met,
Since Merlin paid his Demon all the monstrous debt.

'It shall be as thou wishest,' said the Dame:
'All cates and dainties shall be stored there
'Quickly on this feast-night: by the tambour frame
'Her own lute thou wilt see: no time to spare,
'For I am slow and feeble, and scarce dare
'On such a catering trust my dizzy head.
'Wait here, my child, with patience; kneel in prayer
'The while: Ah! thou must needs the lady wed,
'Or may I never leave my grave among the dead.'

So saying, she hobbled off with busy fear.
The lover's endless minutes slowly pass'd;
The dame return'd, and whisper'd in his ear
To follow her; with aged eyes aghast
From fright of dim espial. Safe at last,
Through many a dusky gallery, they gain
The maiden's chamber, silken, hush'd, and chaste;
Where Porphyro took covert, pleas'd amain
His poor guide hurried back with agues in her brain.

Her falt'ring hand upon the balustrade,
Old Angela was feeling for the stair,
When Madeline, St. Agnes' charmed maid,
Rose, like a mission'd spirit, unaware:
With silver taper's light, and pious care,
She turn'd, and down the aged gossip led
To a safe level matting. Now prepare,
Young Porphyro, for gazing on that bed;
She comes, she comes again, like ring-dove fray'd and fled.

Out went the taper as she hurried in;
Its little smoke, in pallid moonshine, died:
She clos'd the door, she panted, all akin
To spirits of the air, and visions wide:
No uttered syllable, or, woe betide!
But to her heart, her heart was voluble,
Paining with eloquence her balmy side;
As though a tongueless nightingale should swell
Her throat in vain, and die, heart-stifled, in her dell..

A casement high and triple-arch'd there was,
All garlanded with carven imag'ries
Of fruits, and flowers, and bunches of knot-grass,
And diamonded with panes of quaint device,
Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes,
As are the tiger-moth's deep-damask'd wings;
And in the midst, 'mong thousand heraldries,
And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings,
A shielded scutcheon blush'd with blood of queens and kings.

Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,
And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast,
As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon;
Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together prest,
And on her silver cross soft amethyst,
And on her hair a glory, like a saint:
She seem'd a splendid angel, newly drest,
Save wings, for heaven:—Porphyro grew faint:
She knelt, so pure a thing, so free from mortal taint.

Anon his heart revives: her vespers done,
Of all its wreathed pearls her hair she frees;
Unclasps her warmed jewels one by one;
Loosens her fragrant boddice; by degrees
Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees:
Half-hidden, like a mermaid in sea-weed,
Pensive awhile she dreams awake, and sees,
In fancy, fair St. Agnes in her bed,
But dares not look behind, or all the charm is fled.

Soon, trembling in her soft and chilly nest,
In sort of wakeful swoon, perplex'd she lay,
Until the poppi'd warmth of sleep oppress'd
Her sooth'd limbs, and soul fatigued away;
Flown, like a thought, until the morrow-day;
Blissfully haven'd both from joy and pain;
Clasp'd like a missal where swart Paynims pray;
Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain,
As though a rose should shut, and be a bud again.

Stol'n to this paradise, and so entranced,
Porphyro gazed upon her empty dress,

And listen'd to her breathing, if it chanced
To wake into a slumberous tenderness;
Which when he heard, that minute did he bless,
And breath'd himself: then from the closet crept,
Noiseless as fear in a wide wilderness,
And over the hush'd carpet, silent, stept,
And 'tween the curtains peep'd, where, lo!—how fast she slept.

Then by the bed-side, where the faded moon
Made a dim, silver twilight, soft he set
A table, and, half anguish'd, threw thereon
A cloth of woven crimson, gold, and jet:—
O for some drowsy Morpheap amulet!
The boisterous, midnight, festive clarion,
The kettle-drum, and far-heard clarionet,
Affray his ears, though but in dying tone:—
The hall door shuts again, and all the noise is gone.

And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep,
In blanched linen, smooth, and l. nder'd,
While he from forth the closet brought a heap
Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd
With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
And lucent syrups, tinct with cinnamon;
Manna and dates, in argosy transferr'd
From Fez; and spiced dainties, every one,
From silken Samarcand to cedar'd Lebanon.

These delicacies he heap'd with glowing hand
On golden dishes and in baskets bright
Of wreathed silver: sumptuous they stand
In the retired quiet of the night,
Filling the chilly room with perfume light.—
'And now, my love, my seraph fair, awake!
'Thou art my heaven, and I thine eremite:
'Open thine eyes, for meek St. Agnes' sake,
'Or I shall drowse beside thee, so my soul doth ache.'

Thus whispering, his warm, unnerved arm
Sank in her pillow. Shaded was her dream
By the dusk curtains:—'twas a midnight charm
Impossible to melt as iced stream:

The lustrous salvers in the moonlight gleam;
Broad golden fringe upon the carpet lies:
It seem'd he never, never could redeem
From such a stedfast spell his lady's eyes;
So mus'd awhile, entoil'd in woofed phantasies.

Awakening up, he took her hollow lute,—
Tumultuous,—and, in chords that tenderest be,
He play'd an ancient ditty, long since mute,
In Provence call'd, 'La belle dame sans mercy:'
Close to her ear touching the melody;—
Wherewith disturb'd, she utter'd a soft moan:
He ceased—she panted quick—and suddenly
Her blue affrayed eyes wide open shone:
Upon his knees he sank, pale as smooth-sculptured stone.

Her eyes were open, but she still beheld,
Now wide awake, the vision of her sleep:
There was a painful change, that nigh expell'd
The blisses of her dream so pure and deep
At which fair Madeline began to weep,
And moan forth witless words with many a sigh;
While still her gaze on Porphyro would keep;
Who knelt, with joined hands and piteous eye,
Fearing to move or speak, she look'd so dreamingly.

'Ah, Porphyro!' said she, 'but even now
'Thy voice was at sweet tremble in mine ear,
'Made tuneable with every sweetest vow;
'And those sad eyes were spiritual and clear:
'How chang'd thou art! how pallid, chill, and drear!
'Give me that voice, again, my Porphyro,
'Those looks immortal, those complainings dear!
'Oh leave me not in this eternal woe,
'For if thou diest, my Love, I know not where to go.'

Beyond a mortal man impassion'd far
At these voluptuous accents, he arose,
Ethereal, flush'd, and like a throbbing star
Seen mid the sapphire heaven's deep repose
Into her dream he melted, as the rose
Blendeth its odour with the violet,—

Solution sweet: meantime the frost-wind blows
 Like Love's alarum pattering the sharp sleet
 Against the window-panes; St. Agnes' moon hath set.

'Tis dark: quick pattereth the flaw-blown sleet:
 'This is no dream, my bride, my Madeline!'
 'Tis dark: the iced gusts still rave and beat:
 'No dream, alas! alas! and woe is mine!
 'Porphyro will leave me here to fade and pine.—
 'Cruel! what traitor could thee hither bring?
 'I curse not, for my heart is lost in thine
 'Though thou forsakest a deceived thing;—
 'A dove forlorn and lost with sick unpruned wing.'

'My Madeline! sweet dreamer! lovely bride!
 'Say, may I be for aye thy vassal blest?
 'Thy beauty's shield, heart-shap'd and vermeil dyed?
 'Ah, silver shrine, here will I take my rest
 'After so many hours of toil and quest,
 'A famish'd pilgrim,—saved by miracle.
 'Though I have found, I will not rob thy nest
 'Saving of thy sweet self; if thou think'st well
 'To trust, fair Madeline, to no rude infidel.'

'Hark! 'tis an elfin-storm from faery land,
 'Of haggard seeming, but a boon indeed:
 'Arise—arise! the morning is at hand;—
 'The bloated wassaillers will never heed:—
 'Let us away, my love, with happy speed;
 'There are no ears to hear, or eyes to see—,
 'Drown'd all in Rhenish and the sleepy mead:
 'Awake! arise! my love, and fearless be,
 'For o'er the southern moors I have a home for thee.'

She hurried at his words, beset with fears,
 For there were sleeping dragons all around,
 At glaring watch, perhaps, with ready spears—
 Down the wide stairs a darkling way they found.—
 In all the house was heard no human sound.
 A chain-droop'd lamp was flickering by each door;
 The arras, rich with horseman, hawk, and hound,
 Flutter'd in the besieging wind's uproar;
 And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor.

They glide, like phantoms, into the wide hall;
 Like phantoms, to the iron porch, they glide;
 Where lay the Porter, in uneasy sprawl,
 With a huge empty flaggon by his side:
 The wakeful bloodhound rose, and shook his hide,
 But his sagacious eye an inmate owns:
 By one, and one, the bolts full easy slide:—
 The chains lie silent on the footworn stones;—
 The key turns, and the door upon its hinges groans.

And they are gone: ay, ages long ago
 These lovers fled away into the storm.
 That night the Baron dreamt of many a woe,
 And all his warrior-guests, with shade and form
 Of witch, and demon, and large coffin-worm,
 Were long be-nightmar'd. Angela the old
 Died palsy-twitch'd, with meagre face deform;
 The Beadsman, after thousand aves told,
 For aye unsought for slept among his ashes cold.

Ode to a Nightingale

It has been urged that Keats is confusing us when he exclaims 'Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!' and otherwise contrasts the nightingale's paradise with the harsh world he lives in. His argument however is rather that such music as he is listening to is indestructible and inaccessible to mortal plague and dissonance. It is all, as he would say, a sensation rather than a thought.

The Ode does not attempt any minute equivalent to the singing of nightingales, and the location of the poem, whether it began at Wentworth Place or in the region of 'Constables' Firs,' is chiefly a question for the antiquary. Keats is for 'the forest dim,' and its flowers themselves are to be guessed at and not more.

MY heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
 My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
 Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
 One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:
 'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
 But being too happy in thine happiness,—
 That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees,
 In some melodious plot
 Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
 Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth!
O for a beaker full of the warm South,
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stained mouth;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim:

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs,
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
Already with thee! tender is the night,
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;
But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

Darkling I listen; and, for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
To thy high requiem become a sod.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
The same that oft-times hath
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf.
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep
In the next valley-glades:
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
Fled is that music:—Do I wake or sleep?

Ode on a Grecian Urn

THE piece was published precisely where it should have been—in James Elmes's magazine, *Annals of the Fine Arts*. (This magazine was greatly influenced by B. R. Haydon.) In what spirit should a modern artist work? What had the ancient artists of Greece to tell him through their productions? To consider Keats as concentrating on his defined subject is safest; but the tendency to go beyond that and to detach the last two lines as a manifesto of his own beliefs in brief form, is nothing new. It partly depends on the placing of the inverted commas, but Keats's own MS. is wanting; the judgment then should rest on the three words in the poem 'we', 'thou' and 'ye.'

THOU still unravish'd bride of quietness,
 Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,
 Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
 A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
 What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape
 Of deities or mortals, or of both,
 In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
 What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
 What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
 What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
 Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
 Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
 Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
 Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
 Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
 Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
 Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve;
 She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
 For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
 Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
 And, happy melodist, unwearied,
 For ever piping songs for ever new;
 More happy love! more happy, happy love!
 For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,
 For ever panting, and for ever young;
 All breathing human passion far above,
 That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,
 A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
 To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
 Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
 And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?
 What little town by river or sea shore,
 Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
 Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?
 And, little town, thy streets for evermore
 Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
 Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede
 Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
 With forest branches and the trodden weed;
 Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
 As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!
 When old age shall this generation waste,
 Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
 Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,'—that is all
 Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

Ode to Psyche

THE legend of *Eros and Psyche* was retold in English verse, from the Latin of Apuleius, by Robert Bridges (1885). He signifies his homage to Keats by using as his motto two lines from the Ode.

*O latest born, O loveliest vision far
 Of all Olympus' faded hierarchy.*

Keats had read Mrs. Tighe's earlier poem on the legend, but Bridges's work probably illustrates better what he would have made of it as a narrative. Again his mood is for a world beyond the world, and its flowers are not beheld by waking eyes.

O GODDESS! hear these tuneless numbers, wrung
 By sweet enforcement and remembrance dear,
 And pardon that thy secrets should be sung
 Even into thine own soft-conched ear:
 Surely I dreamt to-day, or did I see
 The winged Psyche with awaken'd eyes?
 I wander'd in a forest thoughtlessly,

And, on the sudden, fainting with surprise,
Saw two fair creatures, couched side by side
In deepest grass, beneath the whisp'ring roof
Of leaves and trembled blossoms, where there ran
A brooklet, scarce espied:

Mid hush'd, cool-rooted flowers, fragrant-eyed,
Blue, silver-white, and budded Tyrian,
They lay calm-breathing on the bedded grass;
Their arms embraced, and their pinions too;
Their lips touch'd not, but had not bade adieu,
As if disjoined by soft-handed slumber,
And ready still past kisses to outnumber
At tender eye-dawn of aureoan love:
The winged boy I knew;
But who wast thou, O happy, happy dove?
His Psyche true!

O latest born and loveliest vision far
Of all Olympus' faded hierarchy!
Fairer than Phœbe's sapphire-region'd star,
Or Vesper, amorous glow-worm of the sky;
Fairer than these, though temple thou hast none,
Nor altar heap'd with flowers;
Nor virgin-choir to make delicious moan
Upon the midnight hours;
No voice, no lute, no pipe, no incense sweet
From chain-swung censer teeming;
No shrine, no grove, no oracle, no heat
Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming.

O brightest! though too late for antique vows,
Too, too late for the fond believing lyre,
When holy were the haunted forest boughs,
Holy the air, the water, and the fire;
Yet even in these days so far retir'd
From happy pieties, thy lucent fans,
Fluttering among the faint Olympians,
I see, and sing, by my own eyes inspired.
So let me be thy choir, and make a moan
Upon the midnight hours;
Thy voice, thy lute, thy pipe, thy incense sweet

From swung censer teeming;
Thy shrine, thy grove, thy oracle, thy heat
Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming.

Yes, I will be thy priest, and build a fane
In some untrodden region of my mind,
Where branched thoughts, new grown with pleasant pain,
Instead of pines shall murmur in the wind:
Far, far around shall those dark-cluster'd trees
Fledge the wild-ridged mountains steep by steep;
And there by zephyrs, streams, and birds, and bees,
The moss-lain Dryads shall be lull'd to sleep;
And in the midst of this wide quietness
A rosy sanctuary will I dress
With the wreath'd trellis of a working brain,
With buds, and bells, and stars without a name,
With all the gardener Fancy e'er could feign,

Who breeding flowers, will never breed the same:
And there shall be for thee all soft delight
That shadowy thought can win,
A bright torch, and a casement ope at night,
To let the warm Love in!

Fancy

EVER let the Fancy roam,
Pleasure never is at home:
At a touch sweet Pleasure melteth,
Like to bubbles when rain pelteth;
Then let winged Fancy wander
Through the thought still spread beyond her:
Open wide the mind's cage-door,
She'll dart forth, and cloudward soar.
O sweet Fancy! let her loose;
Summer's joys are spoilt by use,
And the enjoying of the Spring
Fades as does its blossoming;
Autumn's red-lipp'd fruitage too,
Blushing through the mist and dew
Cloys with tasting: What do then?

Sit thee by the ingle, when
The sear faggot blazes bright,
Spirit of a winter's night;
When the soundless earth is muffled,
And the caked snow is shuffled
From the ploughboy's heavy shoon;
When the Night doth meet the Noon
In a dark conspiracy
To banish Even from her sky.
Sit thee there, and send abroad,
With a mind self-overaw'd.
Fancy, high-commission'd:—send her!
She has vassals to attend her:
She will bring, in spite of frost,
Beauties that the earth hath lost;
She will bring thee, all together,
All delights of summer weather;
All the buds and bells of May,
From dewy sward or thorny spray
All the heaped Autumn's wealth,
With a still, mysterious stealth:
She will mix these pleasures up
Like three fit wines in a cup,
And thou shalt quaff it:—thou shalt hear
Distant harvest-carols clear;
Rustle of the reaped corn:
Sweet birds antheming the morn:
And, in the same moment—hark!
'Tis the early April lark,
Or the rooks, with busy caw,
Foraging for sticks and straw.
Thou shalt, at one glance, behold
The daisy and the marigold;
White-plum'd lilies, and the first
Hedge-grown primrose that hath burst;
Shaded hyacinth, alway
Sapphire queen of the mid-May;
And every leaf, and every flower
Pearled with the self-same shower.
Thou shalt see the field-mouse peep
Meagre from its celled sleep;
And the snake all winter-thin

Cast on sunny bank its skin;
Freckled nest-eggs thou shalt see
Hatching in the hawthorn-tree,
When the hen-bird's wing doth rest
Quiet on her mossy nest;
Then the hurry and alarm
When the bee-hive casts its swarm;
Acorns ripe down-pattering,
While the autumn breezes sing.

Oh, sweet Fancy! let her loose;
Every thing is spoilt by use:
Where's the cheek that doth not fade,
Too much gaz'd at? Where's the maid
Whose lip mature is ever new?
Where's the eye, however blue
Doth not weary? Where's the face
One would meet in every place?
Where's the voice, however soft,
One would hear so very oft?
At a touch sweet Pleasure melteth
Like to bubbles when rain pelteth.
Let, then, winged Fancy find
Thee a mistress to thy mind:
Dulcet-eyed as Ceres' daughter,
Ere the God of Torment taught her
How to frown and how to chide;
With a waist and with a side
White as Hebe's, when her zone
Slipt its golden clasp, and down
Fell her kirtle to her feet,
While she held the goblet sweet,
And Jove grew languid.—Break the mesh
Of the Fancy's silken leash:
Quickly break her prison-string
And such joys as these she'll bring.—
Let the winged Fancy roam.
Pleasure never is at home.

Ode

BARDS of Passion and of Mirth,
Ye have left your souls on earth!
Have ye souls in heaven too,
Double-lived in regions new?
Yes, and those of heaven commune
With the spheres of sun and moon;
With the noise of fountains wond'rous,
And the parle of voices thund'rous;
With the whisper of heaven's trees
And one another, in soft ease
Seated on Elysian lawns
Brows'd by none but Dian's fawns
Underneath large blue-bells tented,
Where the daisies are rose-scented,
And the rose herself has got
Perfume which on earth is not;
Where the nightingale doth sing
Not a senseless, tranced thing.
But divine melodious truth;
Philosophic numbers smooth;
Tales and golden histories
Of heaven and its mysteries.

Thus ye live on high, and then
On the earth ye live again;
And the souls ye left behind you
Teach us, here, the way to find you,
Where your other souls are joying,
Never slumber'd, never cloying.
Here, your earth-born souls still speak
To mortals, of their little week;
Of their sorrows and delights;
Of their passions and their spites;
Of their glory and their shame;
What doth strengthen and what maim.
Thus ye teach us, every day,
Wisdom, though fled far away.

Bards of Passion and of Mirth,
Ye have left your souls on earth!
Ye have souls in heaven too,
Double-lived in regions new!

Lines on the Mermaid Tavern

SOULS of Poets dead and gone,
What Elysium have ye known,
Happy field or mossy cavern,
Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern?
Have ye tippled drink more fine
Than mine host's Canary wine?
Or are fruits of Paradise
Sweeter than those dainty pies
Of venison? O generous food!
Drest as though bold Robin Hood
Would, with his maid Marian,
Sup and bowse from horn and can.

I have heard that on a day
Mine host's sign-board flew away,
Nobody knew whither, till
An astrologer's old quill
To a sheepskin gave the story,
Said he saw you in your glory,
Underneath a new old-sign
Sipping beverage divine,
And pledging with contented smack
The Mermaid in the Zodiac.

Souls of Poets dead and gone,
What Elysium have ye known,
Happy field or mossy cavern,
Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern?

Robin Hood

TO A FRIEND

No! those days are gone away,
And their hours are old and gray,
And their minutes buried all
Under the down-trodden pall
Of the leaves of many years:
Many times have winter's shears,
Frozen North, and chilling East,
Sounded tempests to the feast
Of the forest's whispering fleeces.
Since men knew nor rent nor leases.

No, the bugle sounds no more,
And the twanging bow no more;
Silent is the ivory shrill
Past the heath and up the hill;
There is no mid-forest laugh,
Where lone Echo gives the half
To some wight, amaz'd to hear
Jesting, deep in forest drear.

On the fairest time of June
You may go, with sun or moon,
Or the seven stars to light you,
Or the polar ray to right you:
But you never may behold
Little John, or Robin bold;
Never one, of all the clan,
Thrumming on an empty can
Some old hunting ditty, while
He doth his green way beguile
To fair hostess Merriment,
Down beside the pasture Trent;
For he left the merry tale
Messenger for spicy ale.

Gone, the merry morris din;
Gone, the song of Gamelyn;
Gone, the tough-belted outlaw

Idling in the 'grenè shawe;
All are gone away and past!
And if Robin should be cast
Sudden from his turfed grave,
And if Marian should have
Once again her forest days,
She would weep, and he would craze:
He would swear, for all his oaks,
Fall'n beneath the dockyard strokes,
Have rotted on the briny seas;
She would weep that her wild bees
Sang not to her—strange! that honey
Can't be got without hard money!

So it is: yet let us sing,
Honour to the old bow-string!
Honour to the bugle-horn!
Honour to the woods unshorn!
Honour to the Lincoln green!
Honour to the archer keen!
Honour to tight little John,
And the horse he rode upon!
Honour to bold Robin Hood,
Sleeping in the underwood!
Honour to maid Marian,
And to all the Sherwood-clan!
Though their days have hurried by
Let us two a burden try.

To Autumn

THE companion-piece in English poetry to William Collins's 'Ode to Evening' which Keats had in mind; at Winchester he was in a country well known to Collins. The effect, of course, is not local; it may be compared with the classical-minded drawings of Thomas Stothard, Keats's celebrated contemporary. Sometimes this Ode is taken as having an autobiographical meaning under the charming array of graces; its serenity is transferred to the way of Keats's own life. But probably he is simply catching the spirit of an autumn afternoon,—translating one of Nature's Odes.

SEASON of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozy hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue:
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river shallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

Ode on Melancholy

KEATS wrote, but dropped, a curious stanza probably as his opening one:

*Though you should build a bark of dead men's bones,
And rear a phantom gibbet for a mast,
Stitch creeds together, for a sail, with groans
To fill it out, blood-stained and aghast;
Although your rudder be a dragon's tail
Long sever'd, yet still hard with agony,
Your cordage large uprootings from the skull
Of bald Medusa, certes you would fail
To find the Melancholy—whether she
Dreameth in any isle of Lethe dull . . .*

A spectre ship indeed; had Keats chosen to sail her, she must have found some queer islands; but he was soon aware that the 'melancholy' of grotesque hauntings, of crazy phantasy, though his old favourite Richard Burton might include them in his great book, was not the essential subject for him. He was to write of the dejection which Coleridge had described in an Ode not many years before, but with his own experiences and imagery.

No, no, go not to Lethe, neither twist
Wolf's-bane, tight-rooted, for its poisonous wine;
Nor suffer thy pale forehead to be kiss'd
By nightshade, ruby grape of Proserpine;
Make not your rosary of yew-berries,
Nor let the beetle, nor the death-moth be
Your mournful Psyche, nor the downy owl
A partner in your sorrow's mysteries;
For shade to shade will come too drowsily,
And drown the wakeful anguish of the soul.

But when the melancholy fit shall fall
Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud,
That fosters the droop-headed flowers all,
And hides the green hill in an April shroud;
Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose,
Or on the rainbow of the salt sand-wave,
Or on the wealth of globed peonies;
Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows,
Emprison her soft hand, and let her rave,
And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes.

She dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die;
 And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
 Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh,
 Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips:
 Ay, in the very temple of Delight
 Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine,
 Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue
 Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine;
 His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,
 And be among her cloudy trophies hung.

Hyperion

A FRAGMENT

KEATS follows Shakespeare in accenting the name ('Hyperion to a satyr,') and Homer in making Hyperion the sun-god. Had he contrived to go on with the poem, Woodhouse tells us that he would have passed well beyond the supplies of incident left by the classical mythologists. Apollo's triumph over Hyperion was to have been one of several illustrating the victory of fresh perfections. Keats had a contention, we feel, within himself, which caused the epic to be broken off. He was moved as never before by the idea he was to communicate, but as an artist he was delighted to linger in the production of atmosphere, portrait, group and scene.

*O sweet shepherd, hie thee—
 For methinks thou stay'st too long.*

The narrative does not move enough; but Keats blamed himself too much for his enjoyment of 'Miltonic' composition,—the reason he gives for leaving off.

BOOK ONE

DEEP in the shady sadness of a vale
 Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,
 Far from the fiery noon, and eve's one star,
 Sat gray-hair'd Saturn, quiet as a stone,
 Still as the silence round about his lair;
 Forest on forest hung about his head
 Like cloud on cloud. No stir of air was there,
 Not so much life as on a summer's day
 Robs not one light seed from the feather'd grass,
 But where the dead leaf fell, there did it rest.

A stream went voiceless by, still deadened more
By reason of his fallen divinity
Spreading a shade: the Naiad 'mid her reeds
Press'd her cold finger closer to her lips.

Along the margin-sand large foot-marks went,
No further than to where his feet had stray'd,
And slept there since. Upon the sodden ground
His old right hand lay nerveless, listless, dead,
Unsceptred; and his realmless eyes were closed;
While his bow'd head seem'd list'ning to the Earth,
His ancient mother, for some comfort yet.

It seem'd no force could wake him from his place;
But there came one, who with a kindred hand
Touch'd his wide shoulders, after bending low
With reverence, though to one who knew it not.
She was a Goddess of the infant world;
By her in stature the tall Amazon
Had stood a pigmy's height: she would have ta'en
Achilles by the hair and bent his neck;
Or with a finger stay'd Ixion's wheel.
Her face was large as that of Memphian sphinx,
Pedestal'd haply in a palace court,
When sages look'd to Egypt for their lore.
But oh! how unlike marble was that face:
How beautiful, if sorrow had not made
Sorrow more beautiful than Beauty's self.
There was a listening fear in her regard,
As if calamity had but begun;
As if the vanward clouds of evil days
Had spent their malice, and the sullen rear
Was with its stored thunder labouring up.
One hand she press'd upon that aching spot
Where beats the human heart, as if just there,
Though an immortal, she felt cruel pain:
The other upon Saturn's bended neck
She laid, and to the level of his ear
Leaning with parted lips, some words she spake
In solemn tenour and deep organ tone:
Some mourning words, which in our feeble tongue
Would come in these like accents; O how frail

To that large utterance of the early Gods!
'Saturn, look up!—though wherefore, poor old King?
'I have no comfort for thee, no not one:
'I cannot say, "O wherefore sleepest thou?"
'For heaven is parted from thee, and the earth
'Knows thee not, thus afflicted, for a God;
'And ocean too, with all its solemn noise,
'Has from thy sceptre pass'd; and all the air
'Is emptied of thine hoary majesty.
'Thy thunder, conscious of the new command,
'Rumbles reluctant o'er our fallen house;
'And thy sharp lightning in unpractised hands
'Scorches and burns our once serene domain.
'O aching time! O moments big as years!
'All as ye pass swell out the monstrous truth,
'And press it so upon our weary griefs
'That unbelief has not a space to breathe.
'Saturn, sleep on:—O thoughtless, why did I
'Thus violate thy slumbrous solitude?
'Why should I ope thy melancholy eyes?
'Saturn, sleep on! while at thy feet I weep.'

As when, upon a tranced summer-night,
Those green-rob'd senators of mighty woods,
Tall oaks, branch-charmed by the earnest stars,
Dream, and so dream all night without a stir,
Save from one gradual solitary gust
Which comes upon the silence, and dies off,
As if the ebbing air had but one wave;
So came these words and went; the while in tears
She touch'd her fair large forehead to the ground,
Just where her falling hair might be outspread
A soft and silken mat for Saturn's feet.
One moon, with alteration slow, had shed
Her silver seasons four upon the night,
And still these two were postured motionless,
Like natural sculpture in cathedral cavern;
The frozen God still couchant on the earth,
And the sad Goddess weeping at his feet:
Until at length old Saturn lifted up
His faded eyes, and saw his kingdom gone,
And all the gloom and sorrow of the place,

And that fair kneeling Goddess; and then spake,
As with a palsied tongue, and while his beard
Shook horrid with such aspen-malady:
'O tender spouse of gold Hyperion,
'Thea, I feel thee ere I see thy face;
'Look up, and let me see our doom in it;
'Look up, and tell me if this feeble shape
'Is Saturn's; tell me, if thou hear'st the voice
'Of Saturn; tell me, if this wrinkling brow,
'Naked and bare of its great diadem,
'Peers like the front of Saturn. Who had power
'To make me desolate? whence came the strength?
'How was it nurtur'd to such bursting forth,
'While Fate seem'd strangled in my nervous grasp?
'But it is so; and I am smother'd up,
'And buried from all godlike exercise
'Of influence benign on planets pale,
'Of admonitions to the winds and seas,
'Of peaceful sway above man's harvesting,
'And all those acts which Deity supreme
'Doth ease its heart of love in.—I am gone
'Away from my own bosom: I have left
'My strong identity, my real self,
'Somewhere between the throne, and where I sit
'Here on this spot of earth. Search, Thea, search!
'Open thine eyes eterne, and sphere them round
'Upon all space: space starr'd, and lorn of light;
'Space region'd with life-air; and barren void;
'Spaces of fire, and all the yawn of hell.—
'Search, Thea, search! and tell me, if thou seest
'A certain shape or shadow, making way
'With wings or chariot fierce to repossess
'A heaven he lost erewhile: it must—it must
'Be of ripe progress—Saturn must be King.
'Yes, there must be a golden victory;
'There must be Gods thrown down, and trumpets blown
'Of triumph calm, and hymns of festival
'Upon the gold clouds metropolitan,
'Voices of soft proclaim, and silver stir
'Of strings in hollow shells; and there shall be
'Beautiful things made new, for the surprise
'Of the sky-children; I will give command:
'Thea! Thea! Thea! where is Saturn?'

This passion lifted him upon his feet,
And made his hands to struggle in the air,
His Druid locks to shake and ooze with sweat,
His eyes to fever out, his voice to cease.
He stood, and heard not Thea's sobbing deep;
A little time, and then again he snatch'd
Utterance thus.—'But cannot I create?
'Cannot I form? Cannot I fashion forth
'Another world, another universe,
'To overbear and crumble this to nought?
'Where is another chaos? Where?'—That word
Found way unto Olympus, and made quake
The rebel three.—Thea was startled up,
And in her bearing was a sort of hope,
As thus she quick-voic'd spake, yet full of awe.

'This cheers our fallen house: come to our friends,
'O Saturn! come away, and give them heart;
'I know the covert, for thence came I hither.'
Thus brief; then with beseeching eyes she went
With backward footing through the shade a space:
He follow'd, and she turn'd to lead the way
Through aged boughs, that yielded like the mist
Which eagles cleave upmounting from their nest.

Meanwhile in other realms big tears were shed,
More sorrow like to this, and such like woe,
Too huge for mortal tongue or pen of scribe:
The Titans fierce, self-hid, or prison-bound,
Groan'd for the old allegiance once more,
And listen'd in sharp pain for Saturn's voice.
But one of the whole mammoth-brood still kept
His sov'reignty, and rule, and majesty;—
Blazing Hyperion on his orb'd fire
Still sat, still snuff'd the incense, teeming up
From man to the sun's God; yet unsecure:
For as among us mortals omens drear
Fright and perplex, so also shuddered he—
Not at dog's howl, or gloom-bird's hated screech,
Or the familiar visiting of one
Upon the first toll of his passing bell.
Or prophesyings of the midnight lamp;

But horrors, portion'd to a giant nerve,
Oft made Hyperion ache. His palace bright
Bastion'd with pyramids of glowing gold,
And touch'd with shade of bronzed obelisks,
Glar'd a blood-red through all its thousand courts,
Arches, and domes, and fiery galleries;
And all its curtains of Aurorian clouds
Flush'd angrily: while sometimes eagle's wings,
Unseen before by Gods or wondering men,
Darken'd the place; and neighing steeds were heard,
Not heard before by Gods or wondering men.
Also, when he would taste the spicy wreaths
Of incense, breath'd aloft from sacred hills,
Instead of sweets, his ample palate took
Savour of poisonous brass and metal sick:
And so, when harbour'd in the sleepy west,
After the full completion of fair day,—
For rest divine upon exalted couch
And slumber in the arms of melody,
He pac'd away the pleasant hours of ease
With stride colossal, on from hall to hall;
While far within each aisle and deep recess,
His winged minions in close clusters stood,
Amaz'd and full of fear; like anxious men
Who on wide plains gather in panting troops,
When earthquakes jar their battlements and towers.
Even now, while Saturn, rous'd from icy trance,
Went step for step with Thea through the woods,
Hyperion, leaving twilight in the rear,
Came slope upon the threshold of the west;
Then, as was wont, his palace-door flew ope
In smoothest silence, save what solemn tubes,
Blown by the serious Zephyrs, gave of sweet
And wandering sounds, slow-breathed melodies;
And like a rose in vermeil tint and shape,
In fragrance soft, and coolness to the eye,
That inlet to severe magnificence
Stood full blown, for the God to enter in.

He enter'd, but he enter'd full of wrath;
His flaming robes stream'd out beyond his heels,
And gave a roar, as if of earthly fire,

That scar'd away the meek ethereal Hours
And made their dove-wings tremble. On he flared,
From stately nave to nave, from vault to vault,
Through bowers of fragrant and enwreathed light,
And diamond-paved lustrous long arcades,
Until he reach'd the great main cupola;
There standing fierce beneath, he stamp'd his foot,
And from the basements deep to the high towers
Jarr'd his own golden region; and before
The quavering thunder thereupon had ceas'd,
His voice leapt out, despite of godlike curb,
To this result: 'O dreams of day and night!
'O monstrous forms! O effigies of pain!
'O spectres busy in a cold, cold gloom!
'O lank-eared Phantoms of black-weeded pools!
'Why do I know ye? why have I seen ye? why
'Is my eternal essence thus distraught
'To see and to behold these horrors new?
'Saturn is fallen, am I too to fall?
'Am I to leave this haven of my rest,
'This cradle of my glory, this soft clime,
'This calm luxuriance of blissful light,
'These crystalline pavilions, and pure fanes,
'Of all my lucent empire? It is left
'Deserted, void, nor any haunt of mine.
'The blaze, the splendor, and the symmetry.
'I cannot see—but darkness, death and darkness.
'Even here, into my centre of repose,
'The shady visions come to domineer,
'Insult, and blind, and stifle up my pomp.—
'Fall!—No, by Tellus and her briny robes!
'Over the fiery frontier of my realms
'I will advance a terrible right arm
'Shall scare that infant thunderer, rebel Jove,
'And bid old Saturn take his throne again.'—
He spake, and ceas'd, the while a heavier threat
Held struggle with his throat but came not forth;
For as in theatres of crowded men
Hubbub increases more they call out 'Hush!'
So at Hyperion's words the Phantoms pale
Bestirr'd themselves, thrice horrible and cold;
And from the mirror'd level where he stood

A mist arose, as from a scummy marsh.
At this, through all his bulk an agony
Crept gradual, from the feet unto the crown,
Like a lithe serpent vast and muscular
Making slow way, with head and neck convuls'd
From over-strained might. Releas'd, he fled
To the eastern gates, and full six dewy hours
Before the dawn in season due should blush,
He breath'd fierce breath against the sleepy portals,
Clear'd them of heavy vapours, burst them wide
Suddenly on the ocean's chilly streams.
The planet orb of fire, whereon he rode
Each day from east to west the heavens through,
Spun round in sable curtaining of clouds;
Not therefore veiled quite, blindfold, and hid,
But ever and anon the glancing spheres,
Circles, and arcs, and broad-belting colure,
Glow'd through, and wrought upon the muffling dark
Sweet-shaped lightnings from the nadir deep
Up to the zenith,—hieroglyphics old,
Which sages and keen-eyed astrologers
Then living on the earth, with labouring thought
Won from the gaze of many centuries:
Now lost, save what we find on remnants huge
Of stone, or marble swart; their import gone,
Their wisdom long since fled.—Two wings this orb
Possess'd for glory, two fair argent wings,
Ever exalted at the God's approach.
And now, from forth the gloom their plumes immense
Rose, one by one, till all outspread were;
While still the dazzling globe maintain'd eclipse,
Awaiting for Hyperion's command.
Fain would he have commanded, fain took throne
And bid the day begin, if but for change.
He might not:—No, though a primeval God:
The sacred seasons might not be disturb'd.
Therefore the operations of the dawn
Stay'd in their birth, even as here 'tis told.
Those silver wings expanded sisterly,
Eager to sail their orb; the porches wide
Open'd upon the dusk demesnes of night
And the bright Titan, phrenzied with new woes,

Unus'd to bend, by hard compulsion bent
His spirit to the sorrow of the time;
And all along a dismal rack of clouds,
Upon the boundaries of day and night,
He stretch'd himself in grief and radiance faint.
There as he lay, the Heaven with its stars
Look'd down on him with pity, and the voice
Of Coelus, from the universal space,
Thus whisper'd low and solemn in his ear.
'O brightest of my children dear, earth-born
'And sky-engendered, Son of Mysteries
'All unrevealed even to the powers
'Which met at thy creating; at whose joys
'And palpitations sweet, and pleasures soft,
'I, Coelus, wonder, how they came and whence;
'And at the fruits thereof what shapes they be,
'Distinct, and visible; symbols divine,
'Manifestations of that beauteous life
'Diffus'd unseen throughout eternal space:
'Of these new-form'd art thou, oh brightest child!
'Of these, thy brethren and the Goddesses!
'There is sad feud among ye, and rebellion
'Of son against his sire. I saw him fall,
'I saw my first-born tumbled from his throne!
'To me his arms were spread, to me his voice
'Found way from forth the thunders round his head!
'Pale wox I, and in vapours hid my face.
'Art thou, too, near such doom? vague fear there is:
'For I have seen my sons most unlike Gods.
'Divine ye were created, and divine
'In sad demeanour, solemn, undisturb'd,
'Unruffled, like high Gods, ye liv'd and ruled:
'Now I behold in you fear, hope, and wrath;
'Actions of rage and passion; even as
'I see them, on the mortal world beneath,
'In men who die.—This is the grief, O Son!
'Sad sign of ruin, sudden dismay, and fall!
'Yet do thou strive; as thou art capable,
'As thou canst move about, an evident God;
'And canst oppose to each malignant hour
'Ethereal presence:—I am but a voice;
'My life is but the life of winds and tides,

'No more than winds and tides can I avail:—
'But thou canst.—Be thou therefore in the van
'Of circumstance; yea, seize the arrow's barb:
'Before the tense string murmur.—To the earth!
'For there thou wilt find Saturn, and his woes.
'Meantime I will keep watch on thy bright sun,
'And of thy seasons be a careful nurse.'—
Ere half this region-whisper had come down,
Hyperion arose, and on the stars
Lifted his curved lids, and kept them wide
Until it ceas'd; and still he kept them wide:
And still they were the same bright, patient stars.
Then with a slow incline of his broad breast
Like to a diver in the pearly seas,
Forward he stoop'd over the airy shore,
And plung'd all noiseless into the deep night.

BOOK TWO

JUST at the self-same beat of Time's wide wings
Hyperion slid into the rustled air,
And Saturn gain'd with Thea that sad place
Where Cybele and the bruised Titans mourn'd.
It was a den where no insulting light
Could glimmer on their tears; where their own groans
They felt, but heard not, for the solid roar
Of thunderous waterfalls and torrents hoarse,
Pouring a constant bulk, uncertain where.
Crag jutting forth to crag, and rocks that seem'd
Ever as if just rising from a sleep,
Forehead to forehead held their monstrous horns;
And thus in thousand hugest phantasies
Made a fit roofing to this nest of woe.
Instead of thrones, hard flint they sat upon,
Couches of rugged stone, and slaty ridge
Stubborn'd with iron. All were not assembled:
Some chain'd in torture, and some wandering.
Cœus, and Gyges, and Briareüs,
Typhon, and Dolor, and Porphyryon,
With many more, the brawniest in assault,
Were pent in regions of laborious breath;
Dungeon'd in opaque element, to keep

Their clenched teeth still clench'd, and all their limbs
Lock'd up like veins of metal, cramp'd and screw'd;
Without a motion, save of their big hearts
Heaving in pain, and horribly convuls'd
With sanguine feverous boiling gurge of pulse.
Mnemosyne was straying in the world;
Far from her moon had Phoebe wandered;
And many else were free to roam abroad,
But for the main, here found they covert drear.
Scarce images of life, one here, one there,
Lay vast and edgeways; like a dismal cirque
Of Druid stones, upon a forlorn moor,
When the chill rain begins at shut of eve,
In dull November, and their chancel vault,
The Heaven itself, is blinded throughout night.
Each one kept shroud, nor to his neighbour gave
Or word, or look, or action of despair.
Creüs was one; his ponderous iron mace
Lay by him, and a shatter'd rib of rock
Told of his rage, ere he thus sank and pined.
Iäpetus another; in his grasp,
A serpent's plashy neck; its barbed tongue
Squeez'd from the gorge, and all its uncurl'd length
Dead; and because the creature could not spit
Its poison in the eyes of conquering Jove.
Next Cottus: prone he lay, chin uppermost,
As though in pain; for still upon the flint
He ground severe his skull, with open mouth
And eyes at horrid working. Nearest him
Asia, born of most enormous Caf,
Who cost her mother Tellus keener pangs,
Though feminine, than any of her sons:
More thought than woe was in her dusky face,
For she was prophesying of her glory;
And in her wide imagination stood
Palm-shaded temples, and high rival fanes,
By Oxus or in Ganges' sacred isles.
Even as Hope upon her anchor leans,
So leant she, not so fair, upon a tusk
Shed from the broadest of her elephants.
Above her, on a crag's uneasy shelf,
Upon his elbow rais'd, all prostrate else,

Shadow'd Enceladus; once tame and mild
As grazing ox unworried in the meads;
Now tiger-passion'd, lion-thoughted, wroth,
He meditated, plotted, and even now
Was hurling mountains in that second war,
Not long delay'd, that scar'd the younger Gods
To hide themselves in forms of beast and bird.
Not far hence Atlas; and beside him prone
Phorcus, the sire of Gorgons. Neighbour'd close
Oceanus, and Tethys, in whose lap
Sobb'd Clymene among her tangled hair.
In midst of all lay Themis, at the feet
Of Ops the queen all clouded round from sight;
No shape distinguishable, more than when
Thick night confounds the pine-tops with the clouds:
And many else whose names may not be told.
For when the Muse's wings are air-ward spread,
Who shall delay her flight? And she must chaunt
Of Saturn, and his guide, who now had climb'd
With damp and slippery footing from a depth
More horrid still. Above a sombre cliff
Their heads appear'd, and up their stature grew
Till on the level height their steps found ease:
Then Thea spread abroad her trembling arms
Upon the precincts of this nest of pain,
And sidelong fix'd her eye on Saturn's face:
There saw she direst strife; the supreme God
At war with all the frailty of grief,
Of rage, of fear, anxiety, revenge,
Remorse, spleen, hope, but most of all despair.
Against these plagues he strove in vain; for Fate
Had pour'd a mortal oil upon his head,
A disanointing poison: so that Thea,
Affrighted, kept her still, and let him pass
First onwards in, among the fallen tribe.

As with us mortal men, the laden heart
Is persecuted more, and fever'd more,
When it is nighing to the mournful house
Where other hearts are sick of the same bruise;
So Saturn, as he walk'd into the midst,
Felt faint, and would have sunk among the rest,

But that he met Enceladus's eye,
Whose mightiness, and awe of him, at once
Came like an inspiration; and he shouted,
'Titans, behold your God!' at which some groan'd;
Some started on their feet; some also shouted;
Some wept, some wail'd, all bow'd with reverence;
And Ops, uplifting her black folded veil,
Show'd her pale cheeks, and all her forehead wan.
Her eye-brows thin and jet, and hollow eyes.
There is a roaring in the bleak-grown pines
When Winter lifts his voice; there is a noise
Among immortals when a God gives sign,
With hushing finger, how he means to load
His tongue with the full weight of utterless thought,
With thunder, and with music, and with pomp:
Such noise is like the roar of bleak-grown pines;
Which, when it ceases in this mountain'd world,
No other sound succeeds; but ceasing here,
Among these fallen, Saturn's voice therefrom
Grew up like organ, that begins anew
Its strain, when other harmonies, stopt short,
Leave the dinn'd air vibrating silverly.
Thus grew it up—'Not in my own sad breast,
'Which is its own great judge and searcher out,
'Can I find reason why ye should be thus:
'Not in the legends of the first of days,
'Studied from that old spirit-leaved book
'Which starry Uranus with finger bright
'Sav'd from the shores of darkness, when the waves
'Low-ebb'd still hid it up in shallow gloom;—
'And the which book ye know I ever kept
'For my firm-based footstool:—Ah, infirm!
'Not there, nor in sign, symbol, or portent
'Of element, earth, water, air, and fire,—
'At war, at peace, or inter-quarreling
'One against one, or two, or three, or all
'Each several one against the other three,
'As fire with air loud warring when rain-floods
'Drown both, and press them both against earth's face,
'Where, finding sulphur, a quadruple wrath
'Unhinges the poor world;—not in that strife,
'Wherefrom I take strange lore, and read it deep,

'Can I find reason why ye should be thus:
'No, no-where can unriddle, though I search,
'And pore on Nature's universal scroll
'Even to swooning, why ye, Divinities,
'The first-born of all shap'd and palpable Gods,
'Should cower beneath what, in comparison,
'Is untremendous might. Yet ye are here,
'O'erwhelm'd, and spurn'd, and batter'd, ye are here!
'O Titans, shall I say "Arise!"—Ye groan:
'Shall I say "Crouch!"—Ye groan. What can I then?
'O Heaven wide! O unseen parent dear!
'What can I? Tell me, all ye brethren Gods,
'How we can war, how engine our great wrath!
'O speak your counsel now, for Saturn's ear
'Is all a-hunger'd. Thou, Oceanus,
'Ponderest high and deep; and in thy face
'I see, astonied, that severe content
'Which comes of thought and musing: give us help!

So ended Saturn; and the God of the Sea,
Sophist and sage, from no Athenian grove,
But cogitation in his watery shades,
Arose, with locks not oozy, and began,
In murmurs, which his first-endeavouring tongue
Caught infant-like from the far-foamed sands.
'O ye, whom wrath consumes! who, passion-stung,
'Writhe at defeat, and nurse your agonies!
'Shut up your senses, stifle up your ears,
'My voice is not a bellows unto ire.
'Yet listen, ye who will, whilst I bring proof
'How ye, perforce, must be content to stoop:
'And in the proof much comfort will I give,
'If ye will take that comfort in its truth.
'We fall by course of Nature's law, not force
'Of thunder, or of Jove. Great Saturn, thou
'Hast sifted well the atom-universe;
'But for this reason, that thou art the King,
'And only blind from sheer supremacy,
'One avenue was shaded from thine eyes,
'Through which I wandered to eternal truth.
'And first, as thou wast not the first of powers,
'So art thou not the last; it cannot be:

'Thou art not the beginning nor the end.
'From chaos and parental darkness came
'Light, the first fruits of that intestine broil,
'That sullen ferment, which for wondrous ends
'Was ripening in itself. The ripe hour came,
'And with it light, and light, engendering
'Upon its own producer, forthwith touch'd
'The whole enormous matter into life.
'Upon that very hour, our parentage,
'The Heavens and the Earth, were manifest:
'Then thou first-born, and we the giant-race,
'Found ourselves ruling new and beauteous realms.
'Now comes the pain of truth, to whom 'tis pain;
'O folly! for to bear all naked truths,
'And to envisage circumstance, all calm,
'That is the top of sovereignty. Mark well!
'As Heaven and Earth are fairer, fairer far
'Than Chaos and blank Darkness, though once chiefs;
'And as we show beyond that Heaven and Earth
'In form and shape compact and beautiful,
'In will, in action free, companionship,
'And thousand other signs of purer life;
'So on our heels a fresh perfection treads,
'A power more strong in beauty, born of us
'And fated to excel us, as we pass
'In glory that old Darkness: nor are we
'Thereby more conquer'd, than by us the rule
'Of shapeless Chaos. Say, doth the dull soil
'Quarrel with the proud forests it hath fed,
'And feedeth still, more comely than itself?
'Can it deny the chieftdom of green groves?
'Or shall the tree be envious of the dove
'Because it cooeth, and hath snowy wings
'To wander wherewithal and find its joys?
'We are such forest-trees, and our fair boughs
'Have bred forth, not pale solitary doves,
'But eagles golden-feather'd, who do tower
'Above us in their beauty, and must reign
'In right thereof; for 'tis the eternal law
'That first in beauty should be first in might:
'Yea, by that law, another race may drive
'Our conquerors to mourn as we do now.

'Have ye beheld the young God of the Seas,
'My dispossessor? Have ye seen his face?
'Have ye beheld his chariot, foam'd along
'By noble winged creatures he hath made?
'I saw him on the calmed waters scud,
'With such a glow of beauty in his eyes,
'That it enforc'd me to bid sad farewell
'To all my empire: farewell sad I took,
'And hither came, to see how dolorous fate
'Had wrought upon ye; and how I might best
'Give consolation in this woe extreme.
'Receive the truth, and let it be your balm.'

Whether through poz'd conviction, or disdain,
They guarded silence, when Oceanus
Left murmuring, what deepest thought can tell?
But so it was, none answer'd for a space,
Save one whom none regarded, Clymene;
And yet she answer'd not, only complain'd,
With hectic lips, and eyes up-looking mild,
Thus wording timidly among the fierce:
'O Father, I am here the simplest voice,
'And all my knowledge is that joy is gone,
'And this thing woe crept in among our hearts,
'There to remain for ever, as I fear:
'I would not bode of evil, if I thought
'So weak a creature could turn off the help
'Which by just right should come of mighty Gods;
'Yet let me tell my sorrow, let me tell
'Of what I heard, and how it made me weep,
'And know that we had parted from all hope.
'I stood upon a shore, a pleasant shore,
'Where a sweet clime was breathed from a land
'Of fragrance, quietness, and trees, and flowers.
'Full of calm joy it was, as I of grief;
'Too full of joy and soft delicious warmth;
'So that I felt a movement in my heart
'To chide, and to reproach that solitude
'With songs of misery, music of our woes;
'And sat me down, and took a mouthed shell
'And murmur'd into it, and made melody—
'O melody no more! for while I sang,

'And with poor skill let pass into the breeze
'The dull shell's echo, from a bowery strand
'Just opposite, an island of the sea,
'There came enchantment with the shifting wind,
'That did both drown and keep alive my ears.
'I threw my shell away upon the sand,
'And a wave fill'd it, as my sense was fill'd
'With that new blissful golden melody.
'A living death was in each gush of sounds,
'Each family of rapturous hurried notes,
'That fell, one after one, yet all at once,
'Like pearl beads dropping sudden from their string:
'And then another, then another strain,
'Each like a dove leaving its olive perch,
'With music wing'd instead of silent plumes,
'To hover round my head, and make me sick
'Of joy and grief at once. Grief overcame,
'And I was stopping up my frantic ears,
'When, past all hindrance of my trembling hands,
'A voice came sweeter, sweeter than all tune,
'And still it cried, "Apollo! young Apollo!
'"The morning-bright Apollo! young Apollo!"
'I fled, it follow'd me, and cried "Apollo!"
'O Father, and O Brethren, had ye felt
'Those pains of mine; O Saturn, hadst thou felt,
'Ye would not call this too indulged tongue
'Presumptuous, in thus venturing to be heard.'

So far her voice flow'd on, like timorous brook
That, lingering along a pebbled coast,
Doth fear to meet the sea: but sea it met,
And shudder'd; for the overwhelming voice
Of huge Enceladus swallow'd it in wrath:
The ponderous syllables, like sullen waves
In the half-glutted hollows of reef-rocks,
Came booming thus, while still upon his arm
He lean'd; not rising, from supreme contempt.
'Or shall we listen to the over-wise,
'Or to the over-foolish, Giant-Gods?
'Not thunderbolt on thunderbolt, till all
'That rebel Jove's whole armoury were spent,
'Not world on world upon these shoulders piled,

'Could agonize me more than baby-words
'In midst of this dethronement horrible.
'Speak! roar! shout! yell! ye sleepy Titans all.
'Do ye forget the blows, the buffets vile?
'Are ye not smitten by a youngling arm?
'Dost thou forget, sham Monarch of the Waves,
'Thy scalding in the seas? What, have I rous'd
'Your spleens with so few simple words as these?
'O joy! for now I see ye are not lost:
'O joy! for now I see a thousand eyes
'Wide glaring for revenge!'—As this he said,
He lifted up his stature vast, and stood,
Still without intermission speaking thus:
'Now ye are flames, I'll tell you how to burn,
'And purge the ether of our enemies;
'How to feed fierce the crooked stings of fire,
'And singe away the swollen clouds of Jove,
'Stifling that puny essence in its tent.
'O let him feel the evil he hath done;
'For though I scorn Oceanus's lore,
'Much pain have I for more than loss of realms:
'The days of peace and slumberous calm are fled;
'Those days, all innocent of scathing war,
'When all the fair Existences of heaven
'Came open-eyed to guess what we would speak:—
'That was before our brows were taught to frown,
'Before our lips knew else but solemn sounds;
'That was before we knew the winged thing,
'Victory, might be lost, or might be won.
'And be ye mindful that Hyperion,
'Our brightest brother, still is undisgraced—
'Hyperion, lo! his radiance is here!'

All eyes were on Enceladus's face,
And they beheld, while still Hyperion's name
Flew from his lips up to the vaulted rocks,
A pallid gleam across his features stern:
Not savage, for he saw full many a God
Wroth as himself. He look'd upon them all,
And in each face he saw a gleam of light,
But splendor in Saturn's, whose hoar locks
Shone like the bubbling foam about a keel

When the prow sweeps into a midnight cove.
In pale and silver silence they remain'd,
Till suddenly a splendour, like the morn,
Pervaded all the beetling gloomy steeps,
All the sad spaces of oblivion,
And every gulf. and every chasm old,
And every height, and every sullen depth,
Voiceless, or hoarse with loud tormented streams:
And all the everlasting cataracts.
And all the headlong torrents far and near,
Mantled before in darkness and huge shade,
Now saw the light and made it terrible.
It was Hyperion:—a granite peak
His bright feet touch'd, and there he stay'd to view
The misery his brilliance had betray'd
To the most hateful seeing of itself.
Golden his hair of short Numidian curl,
Regal his shape majestic, a vast shade
In midst of his own brightness, like the bulk
Of Memnon's image at the set of sun
To one who travels from the dusking East:
Sighs, too, as mournful as that Memnon's harp
He utter'd, while his hands contemplative
He press'd together, and in silence stood.
Despondence seiz'd again the fallen Gods
At sight of the dejected King of Day,
And many hid their faces from the light:
But fierce Enceladus sent forth his eyes
Among the brotherhood; and, at their glare,
Uprose Iäpetus, and Creüs too,
And Phorcus, sea-born, and together strode
To where he towered on his eminence.
There those four shouted forth old Saturn's name;
Hyperion from the peak loud answered, 'Saturn!'
Saturn sat near the Mother of the Gods,
In whose face was no joy, though all the Gods
Gave from their hollow throats the name of 'Saturn!'

BOOK THREE

THUS in alternate uproar and sad peace,
Amazed were those Titans utterly.

And that fair kneeling Goddess; and then spake,
As with a palsied tongue, and while his beard
Shook horrid with such aspen-malady:
'O tender spouse of gold Hyperion,
'Thea, I feel thee ere I see thy face;
'Look up, and let me see our doom in it;
'Look up, and tell me if this feeble shape
'Is Saturn's; tell me, if thou hear'st the voice
'Of Saturn; tell me, if this wrinkling brow,
'Naked and bare of its great diadem,
'Peers like the front of Saturn. Who had power
'To make me desolate? whence came the strength?
'How was it nurtur'd to such bursting forth,
'While Fate seem'd strangled in my nervous grasp?
'But it is so; and I am smother'd up,
'And buried from all godlike exercise
'Of influence benign on planets pale,
'Of admonitions to the winds and seas,
'Of peaceful sway above man's harvesting,
'And all those acts which Deity supreme
'Doth ease its heart of love in.—I am gone
'Away from my own bosom: I have left
'My strong identity, my real self,
'Somewhere between the throne, and where I sit
'Here on this spot of earth. Search, Thea, search!
'Open thine eyes eterne, and sphere them round
'Upon all space: space starr'd, and lorn of light;
'Space region'd with life-air; and barren void;
'Spaces of fire, and all the yawn of hell.—
'Search, Thea, search! and tell me, if thou seest
'A certain shape or shadow, making way
'With wings or chariot fierce to repossess
'A heaven he lost erewhile: it must—it must
'Be of ripe progress—Saturn must be King.
'Yes, there must be a golden victory;
'There must be Gods thrown down, and trumpets blown
'Of triumph calm, and hymns of festival
'Upon the gold clouds metropolitan,
'Voices of soft proclaim, and silver stir
'Of strings in hollow shells; and there shall be
'Beautiful things made new, for the surprise
'Of the sky-children; I will give command:
'Thea! Thea! Thea! where is Saturn?'

This passion lifted him upon his feet,
And made his hands to struggle in the air,
His Druid locks to shake and ooze with sweat,
His eyes to fever out, his voice to cease.
He stood, and heard not Thea's sobbing deep;
A little time, and then again he snatch'd
Utterance thus.—'But cannot I create?
'Cannot I form? Cannot I fashion forth
'Another world, another universe,
'To overbear and crumble this to nought?
'Where is another chaos? Where?'—That word
Found way unto Olympus, and made quake
The rebel three.—Thea was startled up,
And in her bearing was a sort of hope,
As thus she quick-voic'd spake, yet full of awe.

'This cheers our fallen house: come to our friends,
'O Saturn! come away, and give them heart;
'I know the covert, for thence came I hither.'
Thus brief; then with beseeching eyes she went
With backward footing through the shade a space:
He follow'd, and she turn'd to lead the way
Through aged boughs, that yielded like the mist
Which eagles cleave upmounting from their nest.

Meanwhile in other realms big tears were shed,
More sorrow like to this, and such like woe,
Too huge for mortal tongue or pen of scribe:
The Titans fierce, self-hid, or prison-bound,
Groan'd for the old allegiance once more,
And listen'd in sharp pain for Saturn's voice.
But one of the whole mammoth-brood still kept
His sov'reignty, and rule, and majesty;—
Blazing Hyperion on his orb'd fire
Still sat, still snuff'd the incense, teeming up
From man to the sun's God; yet unsecure:
For as among us mortals omens drear
Fright and perplex, so also shuddered he—
Not at dog's howl, or gloom-bird's hated screech,
Or the familiar visiting of one
Upon the first toll of his passing bell.
Or prophesyings of the midnight lamp;

But horrors, portion'd to a giant nerve,
Oft made Hyperion ache. His palace bright
Bastion'd with pyramids of glowing gold,
And touch'd with shade of bronzed obelisks,
Glar'd a blood-red through all its thousand courts,
Arches, and domes, and fiery galleries;
And all its curtains of Aurorian clouds
Flush'd angrily: while sometimes eagle's wings,
Unseen before by Gods or wondering men,
Darken'd the place; and neighing steeds were heard,
Not heard before by Gods or wondering men.
Also, when he would taste the spicy wreaths
Of incense, breath'd aloft from sacred hills,
Instead of sweets, his ample palate took
Savour of poisonous brass and metal sick:
And so, when harbour'd in the sleepy west,
After the full completion of fair day,—
For rest divine upon exalted couch
And slumber in the arms of melody,
He pac'd away the pleasant hours of ease
With stride colossal, on from hall to hall;
While far within each aisle and deep recess,
His winged minions in close clusters stood,
Amaz'd and full of fear; like anxious men
Who on wide plains gather in panting troops,
When earthquakes jar their battlements and towers.
Even now, while Saturn, rous'd from icy trance,
Went step for step with Thea through the woods,
Hyperion, leaving twilight in the rear,
Came slope upon the threshold of the west;
Then, as was wont, his palace-door flew ope
In smoothest silence, save what solemn tubes,
Blown by the serious Zephyrs, gave of sweet
And wandering sounds, slow-breathed melodies;
And like a rose in vermeil tint and shape,
In fragrance soft, and coolness to the eye,
That inlet to severe magnificence
Stood full blown, for the God to enter in.

He enter'd, but he enter'd full of wrath;
His flaming robes stream'd out beyond his heels,
And gave a roar, as if of earthly fire,

That scar'd away the meek ethereal Hours
And made their dove-wings tremble. On he flared,
From stately nave to nave, from vault to vault,
Through bowers of fragrant and enwreathed light,
And diamond-paved lustrous long arcades,
Until he reach'd the great main cupola;
There standing fierce beneath, he stamp'd his foot,
And from the basements deep to the high towers
Jarr'd his own golden region; and before
The quavering thunder thereupon had ceas'd,
His voice leapt out, despite of godlike curb,
To this result: 'O dreams of day and night!
'O monstrous forms! O effigies of pain!
'O spectres busy in a cold, cold gloom!
'O lank-eared Phantoms of black-weeded pools!
'Why do I know ye? why have I seen ye? why
'Is my eternal essence thus distraught
'To see and to behold these horrors new?
'Saturn is fallen, am I too to fall?
'Am I to leave this haven of my rest,
'This cradle of my glory, this soft clime,
'This calm luxuriance of blissful light,
'These crystalline pavilions, and pure fanes,
'Of all my lucent empire? It is left
'Deserted, void, nor any haunt of mine.
'The blaze, the splendor, and the symmetry.
'I cannot see—but darkness, death and darkness.
'Even here, into my centre of repose,
'The shady visions come to domineer,
'Insult, and blind, and stifle up my pomp.—
'Fall!—No, by Tellus and her briny robes!
'Over the fiery frontier of my realms
'I will advance a terrible right arm
'Shall scare that infant thunderer, rebel Jove,
'And bid old Saturn take his throne again.'—
He spake, and ceas'd, the while a heavier threat
Held struggle with his throat but came not forth;
For as in theatres of crowded men
Hubbub increases more they call out 'Hush!'
So at Hyperion's words the Phantoms pale
Bestirr'd themselves, thrice horrible and cold;
And from the mirror'd level where he stood

A mist arose, as from a scummy marsh.
At this, through all his bulk an agony
Crept gradual, from the feet unto the crown,
Like a lithe serpent vast and muscular
Making slow way, with head and neck convuls'd
From over-strained might. Releas'd, he fled
To the eastern gates, and full six dewy hours
Before the dawn in season due should blush,
He breath'd fierce breath against the sleepy portals,
Clear'd them of heavy vapours, burst them wide
Suddenly on the ocean's chilly streams.
The planet orb of fire, whereon he rode
Each day from east to west the heavens through,
Spun round in sable curtaining of clouds;
Not therefore veiled quite, blindfold, and hid,
But ever and anon the glancing spheres,
Circles, and arcs, and broad-belting colure,
Glow'd through, and wrought upon the muffling dark
Sweet-shaped lightnings from the nadir deep
Up to the zenith,—hieroglyphics old,
Which sages and keen-eyed astrologers
Then living on the earth, with labouring thought
Won from the gaze of many centuries:
Now lost, save what we find on remnants huge
Of stone, or marble swart; their import gone,
Their wisdom long since fled.—Two wings this orb
Possess'd for glory, two fair argent wings,
Ever exalted at the God's approach.
And now, from forth the gloom their plumes immense
Rose, one by one, till all outspreaded were;
While still the dazzling globe maintain'd eclipse,
Awaiting for Hyperion's command.
Fain would he have commanded, fain took throne
And bid the day begin, if but for change.
He might not:—No, though a primeval God:
The sacred seasons might not be disturb'd.
Therefore the operations of the dawn
Stay'd in their birth, even as here 'tis told.
Those silver wings expanded sisterly,
Eager to sail their orb; the porches wide
Open'd upon the dusk demesnes of night
And the bright Titan, phrenzied with new woes,

Unus'd to bend, by hard compulsion bent
His spirit to the sorrow of the time;
And all along a dismal rack of clouds,
Upon the boundaries of day and night,
He stretch'd himself in grief and radiance faint.
There as he lay, the Heaven with its stars
Look'd down on him with pity, and the voice
Of Coelus, from the universal space,
Thus whisper'd low and solemn in his ear.
'O brightest of my children dear, earth-born
'And sky-engendered, Son of Mysteries
'All unrevealed even to the powers
'Which met at thy creating; at whose joys
'And palpitations sweet, and pleasures soft,
'I, Coelus, wonder, how they came and whence;
'And at the fruits thereof what shapes they be,
'Distinct, and visible; symbols divine,
'Manifestations of that beauteous life
'Diffus'd unseen throughout eternal space:
'Of these new-form'd art thou, oh brightest child!
'Of these, thy brethren and the Goddesses!
'There is sad feud among ye, and rebellion
'Of son against his sire. I saw him fall,
'I saw my first-born tumbled from his throne!
'To me his arms were spread, to me his voice
'Found way from forth the thunders round his head!
'Pale wox I, and in vapours hid my face.
'Art thou, too, near such doom? vague fear there is:
'For I have seen my sons most unlike Gods.
'Divine ye were created, and divine
'In sad demeanour, solemn, undisturb'd,
'Unruffled, like high Gods, ye liv'd and ruled:
'Now I behold in you fear, hope, and wrath;
'Actions of rage and passion; even as
'I see them, on the mortal world beneath,
'In men who die.—This is the grief, O Son!
'Sad sign of ruin, sudden dismay, and fall!
'Yet do thou strive; as thou art capable,
'As thou canst move about, an evident God;
'And canst oppose to each malignant hour
'Ethereal presence:—I am but a voice;
'My life is but the life of winds and tides,

'No more than winds and tides can I avail:—
'But thou canst.—Be thou therefore in the van
'Of circumstance; yea, seize the arrow's barb
'Before the tense string murmur.—To the earth!
'For there thou wilt find Saturn, and his woes.
'Meantime I will keep watch on thy bright sun,
'And of thy seasons be a careful nurse.'—
Ere half this region-whisper had come down,
Hyperion arose, and on the stars
Lifted his curved lids, and kept them wide
Until it ceas'd; and still he kept them wide:
And still they were the same bright, patient stars.
Then with a slow incline of his broad breast.
Like to a diver in the pearly seas,
Forward he stoop'd over the airy shore,
And plung'd all noiseless into the deep night.

BOOK TWO

JUST at the self-same beat of Time's wide wings
Hyperion slid into the rustled air,
And Saturn gain'd with Thea that sad place
Where Cybele and the bruised Titans mourn'd.
It was a den where no insulting light
Could glimmer on their tears; where their own groans
They felt, but heard not, for the solid roar
Of thunderous waterfalls and torrents hoarse,
Pouring a constant bulk, uncertain where.
Crag jutting forth to crag, and rocks that seem'd
Ever as if just rising from a sleep,
Forehead to forehead held their monstrous horns;
And thus in thousand hugest phantasies
Made a fit roofing to this nest of woe.
Instead of thrones, hard flint they sat upon,
Couches of rugged stone, and slaty ridge
Stubborn'd with iron. All were not assembled:
Some chain'd in torture, and some wandering.
Cœus, and Gyges, and Briareüs,
Typhon, and Dolor, and Porphyryon,
With many more, the brawniest in assault,
Were pent in regions of laborious breath;
Dungeon'd in opaque element, to keep

Their clenched teeth still clench'd, and all their limbs
Lock'd up like veins of metal, cramp'd and screw'd;
Without a motion, save of their big hearts
Heaving in pain, and horribly convuls'd
With sanguine feverous boiling gurge of pulse.
Mnemosyne was straying in the world;
Far from her moon had Phœbe wandered;
And many else were free to roam abroad,
But for the main, here found they covert drear.
Scarce images of life, one here, one there,
Lay vast and edgeways; like a dismal cirque
Of Druid stones, upon a forlorn moor,
When the chill rain begins at shut of eve,
In dull November, and their chancel vault,
The Heaven itself, is blinded throughout night.
Each one kept shroud, nor to his neighbour gave
Or word, or look, or action of despair.
Creüs was one; his ponderous iron mace
Lay by him, and a shatter'd rib of rock
Told of his rage, ere he thus sank and pined.
Iäpetus another; in his grasp,
A serpent's plashy neck; its barbed tongue
Squeez'd from the gorge, and all its uncurl'd length
Dead; and because the creature could not spit
Its poison in the eyes of conquering Jove.
Next Cottus: prone he lay, chin uppermost,
As though in pain; for still upon the flint
He ground severe his skull, with open mouth
And eyes at horrid working. Nearest him
Asia, born of most enormous Caf,
Who cost her mother Tellus keener pangs,
Though feminine, than any of her sons:
More thought than woe was in her dusky face,
For she was prophesying of her glory;
And in her wide imagination stood
Palm-shaded temples, and high rival fanes,
By Oxus or in Ganges' sacred isles.
Even as Hope upon her anchor leans,
So leant she, not so fair, upon a tusk
Shed from the broadest of her elephants.
Above her, on a crag's uneasy shelf,
Upon his elbow rais'd, all prostrate else,

Shadow'd Enceladus; once tame and mild
As grazing ox unworried in the meads;
Now tiger-passion'd, lion-thoughted, wroth,
He meditated, plotted, and even now
Was hurling mountains in that second war,
Not long delay'd, that scar'd the younger Gods
To hide themselves in forms of beast and bird.
Not far hence Atlas; and beside him prone
Phorcus, the sire of Gorgons. Neighbour'd close
Oceanus, and Tethys, in whose lap
Sobb'd Clymene among her tangled hair.
In midst of all lay Themis, at the feet
Of Ops the queen all clouded round from sight;
No shape distinguishable, more than when
Thick night confounds the pine-tops with the clouds:
And many else whose names may not be told.
For when the Muse's wings are air-ward spread,
Who shall delay her flight? And she must chaunt
Of Saturn, and his guide, who now had climb'd
With damp and slippery footing from a depth
More horrid still. Above a sombre cliff
Their heads appear'd, and up their stature grew
Till on the level height their steps found ease:
Then Thea spread abroad her trembling arms
Upon the precincts of this nest of pain,
And sidelong fix'd her eye on Saturn's face:
There saw she direst strife; the supreme God
At war with all the frailty of grief,
Of rage, of fear, anxiety, revenge,
Remorse, spleen, hope, but most of all despair.
Against these plagues he strove in vain; for Fate
Had pour'd a mortal oil upon his head,
A disanointing poison: so that Thea,
Affrighted, kept her still, and let him pass
First onwards in, among the fallen tribe.

As with us mortal men, the laden heart
Is persecuted more, and fever'd more,
When it is nighing to the mournful house
Where other hearts are sick of the same bruise;
So Saturn, as he walk'd into the midst,
Felt faint, and would have sunk among the rest,

But that he met Enceladus's eye,
Whose mightiness, and awe of him, at once
Came like an inspiration; and he shouted,
'Titans, behold your God!' at which some groan'd;
Some started on their feet; some also shouted;
Some wept, some wail'd, all bow'd with reverence;
And Ops, uplifting her black folded veil,
Show'd her pale cheeks, and all her forehead wan.
Her eye-brows thin and jet, and hollow eyes.
There is a roaring in the bleak-grown pines
When Winter lifts his voice; there is a noise
Among immortals when a God gives sign,
With hushing finger, how he means to load
His tongue with the full weight of utterless thought,
With thunder, and with music, and with pomp:
Such noise is like the roar of bleak-grown pines;
Which, when it ceases in this mountain'd world,
No other sound succeeds; but ceasing here,
Among these fallen, Saturn's voice therefrom
Grew up like organ, that begins anew
Its strain, when other harmonies, stopt short,
Leave the dinn'd air vibrating silverly.
Thus grew it up—'Not in my own sad breast,
'Which is its own great judge and searcher out,
'Can I find reason why ye should be thus:
'Not in the legends of the first of days,
'Studied from that old spirit-leaved book
'Which starry Uranus with finger bright
'Sav'd from the shores of darkness, when the waves
'Low-ebb'd still hid it up in shallow gloom;—
'And the which book ye know I ever kept
'For my firm-based footstool:—Ah, infirm!
'Not there, nor in sign, symbol, or portent
'Of element, earth, water, air, and fire,—
'At war, at peace, or inter-quarreling
'One against one, or two, or three, or all
'Each several one against the other three,
'As fire with air loud warring when rain-floods
'Drown both, and press them both against earth's face,
'Where, finding sulphur, a quadruple wrath
'Unhinges the poor world;—not in that strife,
'Wherefrom I take strange lore, and read it deep,

'Can I find reason why ye should be thus:
'No, no-where can unriddle, though I search,
'And pore on Nature's universal scroll
'Even to swooning, why ye, Divinities,
'The first-born of all shap'd and palpable Gods,
'Should cower beneath what, in comparison,
'Is untremendous might. Yet ye are here,
'O'erwhelm'd, and spurn'd, and batter'd, ye are here!
'O Titans, shall I say "Arise!"—Ye groan:
'Shall I say "Crouch!"—Ye groan. What can I then?
'O Heaven wide! O unseen parent dear!
'What can I? Tell me, all ye brethren Gods,
'How we can war, how engine our great wrath!
'O speak your counsel now, for Saturn's ear
'Is all a-hunger'd. Thou, Oceanus,
'Ponderest high and deep; and in thy face
'I see, astonied, that severe content
'Which comes of thought and musing: give us help!

So ended Saturn; and the God of the Sea,
Sophist and sage, from no Athenian grove,
But cogitation in his watery shades,
Arose, with locks not oozy, and began,
In murmurs, which his first-endeavouring tongue
Caught infant-like from the far-foamed sands.
'O ye, whom wrath consumes! who, passion-stung,
'Writhe at defeat, and nurse your agonies!
'Shut up your senses, stifle up your ears,
'My voice is not a bellows unto ire.
'Yet listen, ye who will, whilst I bring proof
'How ye, perforce, must be content to stoop:
'And in the proof much comfort will I give,
'If ye will take that comfort in its truth.
'We fall by course of Nature's law, not force
'Of thunder, or of Jove. Great Saturn, thou
'Hast sifted well the atom-universe;
'But for this reason, that thou art the King,
'And only blind from sheer supremacy,
'One avenue was shaded from thine eyes,
'Through which I wandered to eternal truth.
'And first, as thou wast not the first of powers,
'So art thou not the last; it cannot be:

'Thou art not the beginning nor the end.
'From chaos and parental darkness came
'Light, the first fruits of that intestine broil,
'That sullen ferment, which for wondrous ends
'Was ripening in itself. The ripe hour came,
'And with it light, and light, engendering
'Upon its own producer, forthwith touch'd
'The whole enormous matter into life.
'Upon that very hour, our parentage,
'The Heavens and the Earth, were manifest:
'Then thou first-born, and we the giant-race,
'Found ourselves ruling new and beauteous realms.
'Now comes the pain of truth, to whom 'tis pain;
'O folly! for to bear all naked truths,
'And to envisage circumstance, all calm,
'That is the top of sovereignty. Mark well!
'As Heaven and Earth are fairer, fairer far
'Than Chaos and blank Darkness, though once chiefs;
'And as we show beyond that Heaven and Earth
'In form and shape compact and beautiful,
'In will, in action free, companionship,
'And thousand other signs of purer life;
'So on our heels a fresh perfection treads,
'A power more strong in beauty, born of us
'And fated to excel us, as we pass
'In glory that old Darkness: nor are we
'Thereby more conquer'd, than by us the rule
'Of shapeless Chaos. Say, doth the dull soil
'Quarrel with the proud forests it hath fed,
'And feedeth still, more comely than itself?
'Can it deny the chiefdom of green groves?
'Or shall the tree be envious of the dove
'Because it cooeth, and hath snowy wings
'To wander wherewithal and find its joys?
'We are such forest-trees, and our fair boughs
'Have bred forth, not pale solitary doves,
'But eagles golden-feather'd, who do tower
'Above us in their beauty, and must reign
'In right thereof; for 'tis the eternal law
'That first in beauty should be first in might:
'Yea, by that law, another race may drive
'Our conquerors to mourn as we do now.

'Have ye beheld the young God of the Seas,
'My dispossessor? Have ye seen his face?
'Have ye beheld his chariot, foam'd along
'By noble winged creatures he hath made?
'I saw him on the calmed waters scud,
'With such a glow of beauty in his eyes,
'That it enforc'd me to bid sad farewell
'To all my empire: farewell sad I took,
'And hither came, to see how dolorous fate
'Had wrought upon ye; and how I might best
'Give consolation in this woe extreme.
'Receive the truth, and let it be your balm.'

Whether through poz'd conviction, or disdain,
They guarded silence, when Oceanus
Left murmuring, what deepest thought can tell?
But so it was, none answer'd for a space,
Save one whom none regarded, Clymene;
And yet she answer'd not, only complain'd,
With hectic lips, and eyes up-looking mild,
Thus wording timidly among the fierce:
'O Father, I am here the simplest voice,
'And all my knowledge is that joy is gone,
'And this thing woe crept in among our hearts,
'There to remain for ever, as I fear:
'I would not bode of evil, if I thought
'So weak a creature could turn off the help
'Which by just right should come of mighty Gods;
'Yet let me tell my sorrow, let me tell
'Of what I heard, and how it made me weep,
'And know that we had parted from all hope.
'I stood upon a shore, a pleasant shore,
'Where a sweet clime was breathed from a land
'Of fragrance, quietness, and trees, and flowers.
'Full of calm joy it was, as I of grief;
'Too full of joy and soft delicious warmth;
'So that I felt a movement in my heart
'To chide, and to reproach that solitude
'With songs of misery, music of our woes;
'And sat me down, and took a mouthed shell
'And murmur'd into it, and made melody—
'O melody no more! for while I sang,

'And with poor skill let pass into the breeze
'The dull shell's echo, from a bowery strand
'Just opposite, an island of the sea,
'There came enchantment with the shifting wind,
'That did both drown and keep alive my ears.
'I threw my shell away upon the sand,
'And a wave fill'd it, as my sense was fill'd
'With that new blissful golden melody.
'A living death was in each gush of sounds,
'Each family of rapturous hurried notes,
'That fell, one after one, yet all at once,
'Like pearl beads dropping sudden from their string:
'And then another, then another strain,
'Each like a dove leaving its olive perch,
'With music wing'd instead of silent plumes,
'To hover round my head, and make me sick
'Of joy and grief at once. Grief overcame,
'And I was stopping up my frantic ears,
'When, past all hindrance of my trembling hands,
'A voice came sweeter, sweeter than all tune,
'And still it cried, "Apollo! young Apollo!"
'"The morning-bright Apollo! young Apollo!"
'I fled, it follow'd me, and cried "Apollo!"
'O Father, and O Brethren, had ye felt
'Those pains of mine; O Saturn, hadst thou felt,
'Ye would not call this too indulged tongue
'Presumptuous, in thus venturing to be heard.'

So far her voice flow'd on, like timorous brook
That, lingering along a pebbled coast,
Doth fear to meet the sea: but sea it met,
And shudder'd; for the overwhelming voice
Of huge Enceladus swallow'd it in wrath:
The ponderous syllables, like sullen waves
In the half-glutted hollows of reef-rocks,
Came booming thus, while still upon his arm
He lean'd; not rising, from supreme contempt.
'Or shall we listen to the over-wise,
'Or to the over-foolish, Giant-Gods?
'Not thunderbolt on thunderbolt, till all
'That rebel Jove's whole armoury were spent,
'Not world on world upon these shoulders piled,

'Could agonize me more than baby-words
'In midst of this dethronement horrible.
'Speak! roar! shout! yell! ye sleepy Titans all.
'Do ye forget the blows, the buffets vile?
'Are ye not smitten by a youngling arm?
'Dost thou forget, sham Monarch of the Waves,
'Thy scalding in the seas? What, have I rous'd
'Your spleens with so few simple words as these?
'O joy! for now I see ye are not lost:
'O joy! for now I see a thousand eyes
'Wide glaring for revenge!'—As this he said,
He lifted up his stature vast, and stood,
Still without intermission speaking thus:
'Now ye are flames, I'll tell you how to burn,
'And purge the ether of our enemies;
'How to feed fierce the crooked stings of fire,
'And singe away the swollen clouds of Jove,
'Stifling that puny essence in its tent.
'O let him feel the evil he hath done;
'For though I scorn Oceanus's lore,
'Much pain have I for more than loss of realms:
'The days of peace and slumberous calm are fled;
'Those days, all innocent of scathing war,
'When all the fair Existences of heaven
'Came open-eyed to guess what we would speak:—
'That was before our brows were taught to frown,
'Before our lips knew else but solemn sounds;
'That was before we knew the winged thing,
'Victory, might be lost, or might be won.
'And be ye mindful that Hyperion,
'Our brightest brother, still is undisgraced—
'Hyperion, lo! his radiance is here!'

All eyes were on Enceladus's face,
And they beheld, while still Hyperion's name
Flew from his lips up to the vaulted rocks,
A pallid gleam across his features stern:
Not savage, for he saw full many a God
Wroth as himself. He look'd upon them all,
And in each face he saw a gleam of light,
But splendor in Saturn's, whose hoar locks
Shone like the bubbling foam about a keel

When the prow sweeps into a midnight cove.
In pale and silver silence they remain'd,
Till suddenly a splendour, like the morn,
Pervaded all the beetling gloomy steeps,
All the sad spaces of oblivion,
And every gulf, and every chasm old,
And every height, and every sullen depth,
Voiceless, or hoarse with loud tormented streams:
And all the everlasting cataracts.
And all the headlong torrents far and near,
Mantled before in darkness and huge shade,
Now saw the light and made it terrible.
It was Hyperion:—a granite peak
His bright feet touch'd, and there he stay'd to view
The misery his brilliance had betray'd
To the most hateful seeing of itself.
Golden his hair of short Numidian curl,
Regal his shape majestic, a vast shade
In midst of his own brightness, like the bulk
Of Memnon's image at the set of sun
To one who travels from the dusking East:
Sighs, too, as mournful as that Memnon's harp
He utter'd, while his hands contemplative
He press'd together, and in silence stood.
Despondence seiz'd again the fallen Gods
At sight of the dejected King of Day,
And many hid their faces from the light:
But fierce Enceladus sent forth his eyes
Among the brotherhood; and, at their glare,
Uprose Iäpetus, and Creüs too,
And Phorcus, sea-born, and together strode
To where he towered on his eminence.
There those four shouted forth old Saturn's name;
Hyperion from the peak loud answered, 'Saturn!'
Saturn sat near the Mother of the Gods,
In whose face was no joy, though all the Gods
Gave from their hollow throats the name of 'Saturn!'

BOOK THREE

THUS in alternate uproar and sad peace,
Amazed were those Titans utterly.

O leave them, Muse! O leave them to their woes:
For thou art weak to sing such tumults dire:
A solitary sorrow best befits
Thy lips, and antheming a lonely grief.
Leave them, O Muse! for thou anon wilt find
Many a fallen old Divinity
Wandering in vain about bewildered shores.
Meantime touch piously the Delphic harp,
And not a wind of heaven but will breathe
In aid soft warble from the Dorian flute;
For lo! 'tis for the Father of all verse.
Flush every thing that hath a vermeil hue,
Let the rose glow intense and warm the air,
And let the clouds of even and of morn
Float in voluptuous fleeces o'er the hills;
Let the red wine within the goblet boil,
Cold as a bubbling well; let faint-lipp'd shells,
On sands, or in great deeps, vermilion turn
Through all their labyrinths; and let the maid
Blush keenly, as with some warm kiss surpris'd.
Chief isle of the embowered Cyclades,
Rejoice, O Delos, with thine olives green,
And poplars, and lawn-shading palms, and beech,
In which the Zephyr breathes the loudest song,
And hazels thick, dark-stemm'd beneath the shade:
Apollo is once more the golden theme!
Where was he, when the Giant of the Sun
Stood bright, amid the sorrow of his peers?
Together had he left his mother fair
And his twin-sister sleeping in their bower,
And in the morning twilight wandered forth
Beside the osiers of a rivulet,
Full ankle-deep in lilies of the vale.
The nightingale had ceas'd, and a few stars
Were lingering in the heavens, while the thrush
Began calm-throated. Throughout all the isle
There was no covert, no retired cave
Unhaunted by the murmurous noise of waves,
Though scarcely heard in many a green recess.
He listen'd, and he wept, and his bright tears
Went trickling down the golden bow he held.
Thus with half-shut suffused eyes he stood,

While from beneath some cumbrous boughs hard by
With solemn step an awful Goddess came,
And there was purport in her looks for him,
Which he with eager guess began to read
Perplex'd, the while melodiously he said:
'How cam'st thou over the unfooted sea?
'Or hath that antique mien and robed form
'Mov'd in these vales invisible till now?
'Sure I have heard those vestments sweeping o'er
'The fallen leaves, when I have sat alone
'In cool mid-forest. Surely I have traced
'The rustle of those ample skirts about
'These grassy solitudes, and seen the flowers
'Lift up their heads, as still the whisper pass'd.
'Goddess! I have beheld those eyes before,
'And their eternal calm, and all that face,
'Or I have dream'd.'—'Yes,' said the supreme shape,
'Thou hast dream'd of me; and awaking up
'Didst find a lyre all golden by thy side,
'Whose strings touch'd by thy fingers, all the vast
'Unwearied ear of the whole universe
'Listen'd in pain and pleasure at the birth
'Of such new tuneful wonder. Is't not strange
'That thou shouldst weep, so gifted? Tell me, youth,
'What sorrow thou canst feel; for I am sad
'When thou dost shed a tear: explain thy griefs
'To one who in this lonely isle hath been
'The watcher of thy sleep and hours of life,
'From the young day when first thy infant hand
'Pluck'd witless the weak flowers, till thine arm
'Could bend that bow heroic to all times.
'Show thy heart's secret to an ancient Power
'Who hath forsaken old and sacred thrones
'For prophecies of thee, and for the sake
'Of loveliness new born.'—Apollo then,
With sudden scrutiny and gloomless eyes,
Thus answer'd, while his white melodious throat
Throbb'd with the syllables.—'Mnemosyne!
'Thy name is on my tongue, I know not how;
'Why should I tell thee what thou so well seest?
'Why should I strive to show what from thy lips
'Would come no mystery? For me, dark, dark.

'And painful vile oblivion seals my eyes:
'I strive to search wherefore I am so sad,
'Until a melancholy numbs my limbs;
'And then upon the grass I sit, and moan,
'Like one who once had wings.—O why should I
'Feel curs'd and thwarted, when the liegeless air
'Yields to my step aspirant? why should I
'Spurn the green turf as hateful to my feet?
'Goddess benign, point forth some unknown thing:
'Are there not other regions than this isle?
'What are the stars? There is the sun, the sun!
'And the most patient brilliance of the moon!
'And stars by thousands! Point me out the way
'To any one particular beauteous star,
'And I will flit into it with my lyre,
'And make its silvery splendour pant with bliss.
'I have heard the cloudy thunder: Where is power?
'Whose hand, whose essence, what divinity
'Makes this alarum in the elements,
'While I here idle listen on the shores
'In fearless yet in aching ignorance?
'O tell me, lonely Goddess, by thy harp,
'That waileth every morn and eventide,
'Tell me why thus I rave, about these groves!
'Mute thou remainest—Mute! yet I can read
'A wondrous lesson in thy silent face:
'Knowledge enormous makes a God of me.
'Names, deeds, gray legends, dire events, rebellions,
'Majesties, sovran voices, agonies,
Creations and destroyings, all at once
'Pour into the wide hollows of my brain,
'And deify me, as if some blithe wine
'Or bright elixir peerless I had drunk.
'And so become immortal,'—Thus the God,
While his enkindled eyes, with level glance
Beneath his white soft temples, stedfast kept
Trembling with light upon Mnemosyne.
Soon wild commotions shook him, and made flush
All the immortal fairness of his limbs;
Most like the struggle at the gate of death;
Or liker still to one who should take leave
Of pale immortal death, and with a pang

As hot as death's is chill, with fierce convulse
Die into life: so young Apollo anguish'd:
His very hair, his golden tresses famed
Kept undulation round his eager neck.
During the pain Mnemosyne upheld
Her arms as one who prophesied.—At length
Apollo shriek'd;—and lo! from all his limbs
Celestial★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

THE FALL OF HYPERION
A DREAM

*An Attempt Made at the End of 1819
to Reconstruct the Poem*

NOTE TO THE FALL OF HYPERION

THE most mature attempt that he ever made to express some of his own convictions concerning human life. . . . The style, being evidently less mastered than in the longer poem, might at first sight deceive; but it should not have deceived, for, in spite of the inefficient execution, it is in some respects an advance; it aims at a greater severity and has a more thoughtful power than any of Keats's other work.' [Robert Bridges.] This recommendation of Keats's revision was formerly a heresy. R. M. Milnes, who first published 'The Fall of Hyperion,' thought it showed the wonderful energy of Keats's imagination, still looking for a new greatness. Others regarded it as betraying Keats's decline. Edward Thomas says, 'It suffers from a general thinning of style. It is infirm with thoughts, at times openly didactic, like Wordsworth; at others, touched too closely with general and personal sadness. . . . His pitifulness was grown incontinent.'

Keats's reading in 1818 included particularly H. F. Cary's translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Not only the substance of this poem but the subdued style of the translation took hold of his mind. The revision of *Hyperion* was one of the effects of this influence. The miniature edition of Cary's 'Dante' taken over by Taylor and Hessey in 1818 was his only book during his tour of Scotland.

The Fall of Hyperion

CANTO I

FANATICS have their dreams, wherewith they weave
A paradise for a sect; the savage too
From forth the loftiest fashion of his sleep
Guesses at Heaven; pity these have not
Trac'd upon vellum or wild Indian leaf
The shadows of melodious utterance.
But bare of laurel they live, dream, and die;
For Poesy alone can tell her dreams,
With the fine spell of words alone can save
Imagination from the sable chain
And dumb enchantment. Who alive can say,
'Thou art no Poet—may'st not tell thy dreams?'
Since every man whose soul is not a clod
Hath visions, and would speak, if he had loved
And been well nurtured in his mother tongue.
Whether the dream now purpos'd to rehearse
Be poet's or fanatics' will be known
When this warm scribe my hand is in the grave.

Methought I stood where trees of every clime,
Palm, myrtle, oak, and sycamore, and beech,
With plantain, and spice-blossoms, made a screen;
In neighbourhood of fountains (by the noise
Soft-showering in my ears), and (by the touch
Of scent) not far from roses. Turning round
I saw an arbour with a drooping roof
Of trellis vines, and bells, and larger blooms,
Like floral censers swinging light in air;
Before its wreathed doorway, on a mound
Of moss, was spread a feast of summer fruits,
Which, nearer seen, seem'd refuse of a meal
By angel tasted or our Mother Eve;
For empty shells were scattered on the grass,
And grape-stalks but half bare, and remnants more,
Sweet-smelling, whose pure kinds I could not know.

Still was more plenty than the fabled horn
Thrice emptied could pour forth, at banqueting
For Proserpine return'd to her own fields,
Where the white heifers low. And appetite
More yearning than on earth I ever felt
Growing within, I ate deliciously;
And, after not long, thirsted, for thereby
Stood a cool vessel of transparent juice
Sipp'd by the wander'd bee, the which I took,
And, pledging all the mortals of the world,
And all the dead whose names are in our lips,
Drank. That full draught is parent of my theme.
No Asian poppy nor elixir fine
Of the soon-fading jealous Caliphat;
No poison gender'd in close monkish cell,
To thin the scarlet conclave of old men,
Could so have rapt unwilling life away.
Among the fragrant husks and berries crush'd,
Upon the grass I struggled hard against
The domineering potion; but in vain:
The cloudy swoon came on, and down I sank,
Like a Silenus on an antique vase.
How long I slumber'd 'tis a chance to guess.
When sense of life return'd, I started up
As if with wings; but the fair trees were gone,
The mossy mound and arbour were no more:
I look'd around upon the carved sides
Of an old sanctuary with roof august,
Builded so high, it seem'd that filmed clouds
Might spread beneath, as o'er the stars of heaven;
So old the place was, I remember'd none
The like upon the Earth: what I had seen
Of grey cathedrals, buttress'd walls, rent towers,
The superannuations of sunk realms,
Or Nature's rocks toil'd hard in waves and winds,
Seem'd but the faulture of decrepit things
To that eternal domed Monument.—
Upon the marble at my feet there lay
Store of strange vessels and large draperies,
Which needs had been of dyed asbestos wove,
Or in that place the moth could not corrupt,
So white the linen, so, in some, distinct

Ran imageries from a sombre loom.
All in a mingled heap confus'd there lay
Robes, golden tongs, censer and chafing-dish,
Girdles, and chains, and holy jewelries.

Turning from these with awe, once more I rais'd
My eyes to fathom the space every way;
The embossed roof, the silent massy range
Of columns north and south, ending in mist
Of nothing then to eastward, where black gates;
Were shut against the sunrise evermore.
Then to the west I look'd, and saw far off
An image, huge of feature as a cloud,
At level of whose feet an altar slept,
To be approach'd on either side by steps,
And marble balustrade, and patient travail
To count with toil the innumerable degrees.
Towards the altar sober-paced I went,
Repressing haste, as too unholy there;
And, coming nearer, saw beside the shrine
One minist'ring; and there arose a flame.
When in mid-May the sickening east wind
Shifts sudden to the south, the small warm rain
Melts out the frozen incense from all flowers,
And fills the air with so much pleasant health
That even the dying man forgets his shroud:
Even so that lofty sacrificial fire,
Sending forth Maian incense, spread around
Forgetfulness of everything but bliss,
And clouded all the altar with soft smoke;
From whose white fragrant curtains thus I heard
Language pronounc'd: 'If thou canst not ascend
These steps, die on that marble where thou art.
Thy flesh, near cousin to the common dust,
Will parch for lack of nutriment—thy bones
Will wither in few years, and vanish so
That not the quickest eye could find a grain
Of what thou now art on that pavement cold.
The sands of thy short life are spent this hour,
And no hand in the universe can turn
Thy hourglass, if these gummed leaves be burnt
Ere thou canst mount up these immortal steps.'

I heard, I look'd: two senses both at once
So fine, so subtle, felt the tyranny
Of that fierce threat and the hard task proposed.
Prodigious seem'd the toil, the leaves were yet
Burning—when suddenly a palsied chill
Struck from the paved level up my limbs,
And was ascending quick to put cold grasp
Upon those streams that pulse beside the throat:
I shriek'd, and the sharp anguish of my shriek
Stung my own ears—I strove hard to escape
The numbness; strove to gain the lowest step.
Slow, heavy, deadly was my pace: the cold
Grew stifling, suffocating, at the heart;
And when I clasp'd my hands I felt them not.
One minute before death, my iced foot touch'd
The lowest stair; and as it touch'd, life seem'd
To pour in at the toes: I mounted up,
As once fair angels on a ladder flew
From the green turf to Heaven. 'Holy Power,'
Cried I, approaching near the horned shrine,
'What am I that should so be saved from death?
What am I that another death come not
To choke my utterance sacrilegious, here?'
Then said the veiled shadow, 'Thou hast felt
What 'tis to die and live again before
Thy fated hour; that thou hadst power to do so
Is thy own safety; thou hast dated on
Thy doom.' 'High Prophetess,' said I, 'purge off,
Benign, if so it please thee, my mind's film.'
'None can usurp this height,' return'd that shade,
But those to whom the miseries of the world
Are misery, and will not let them rest.
All else who find a haven in the world,
Where they may thoughtless sleep away their days,
If by a chance into this fane they come,
Rot on the pavement where thou rottedst half.'
'Are there not thousands in the world,' said I,
Encourag'd by the sooth voice of the shade,
'Who love their fellows even to the death,
Who feel the giant agony of the world,
And more, like slaves to poor humanity,
Labour for mortal good? I sure should see

Other men here; but I am here alone.'
'Those whom thou spak'st of are no vision'ries,'
Rejoin'd that voice, 'They are no dreamers weak,
They seek no wonder but the human face;
No music but a happy-noted voice.
They come not here, they have no thought to come.
And thou art here, for thou art less than they.
What benefit canst thou, or all thy tribe,
To the great world? Thou art a dreaming thing,
A fever of thyself—think of the Earth;
What bliss even in hope is there for thee?
What haven? every creature hath its home;
Every sole man hath days of joy and pain,
Whether his labours be sublime or low:
The pain alone; the joy alone; distinct:
Only the dreamer venoms all his days,
Bearing more woe than all his sins deserve.
Therefore, that happiness be somewhat shar'd,
Such things as thou art are admitted oft
Into like gardens thou didst pass erewhile,
And suffer'd in these temples: for that cause
Thou standest safe beneath this statue's knees.'
'That I am favour'd for unworthiness,
By such propitious parley medicin'd
In sickness not ignoble, I rejoice,
Aye, and could weep for love of such award.'
So answer'd I, continuing, 'If it please,
Majestic shadow, tell me: sure not all
Those melodies sung into the world's ear
Are useless: sure a poet is a sage;
A humanist, physician to all men.
That I am none I feel, as vultures feel
They are no birds when eagles are abroad.
What am I then? Thou spakest of my tribe:
What tribe?' The tall shade veil'd in drooping white
Then spake, so much more earnest, that the breath
Moved the thin linen folds that drooping hung
About a golden censer from the hand
Pendent. 'Art thou not of the dreamer tribe?
The poet and the dreamer are distinct,
Diverse, sheer opposite, antipodes.
The one pours out a balm upon the world,

The other vexes it.' Then shouted I
Spite of myself, and with a Pythia's spleen
'Apollo! faded! O far flown Apollo!
Where is thy misty pestilence to creep
Into the dwellings, through the door crannies
Of all mock lyrists, large self-worshippers
And careless Hectorers in proud bad verse.
Though I breathe death with them it will be life
To see them sprawl before me into graves.
Majestic shadow, tell me where I am,
Whose altar this; for whom this incense curls;
What image this whose face I cannot see,
For the broad marble knees; and who thou art,
Of accent feminine so courteous?'

Then the tall shade, in drooping linens veil'd,
Spoke out, so much more earnest, that her breath
Stirr'd the thin folds of gauze that drooping hung
About a golden censer from her hand
Pendent; and by her voice I knew she shed
Long-treasured tears. 'This temple, sad and lone,
'Is all spar'd from the thunder of a war
'Foughten long since by giant hierarchy
'Against rebellion: this old image here,
'Whose carved features wrinkled as he fell,
'Is Saturn's; I, Moneta, left supreme
'Sole Priestess of this desolation.'
I had no words to answer, for my tongue,
Useless, could find about its roofed home
No syllable of a fit majesty
To make rejoinder to Moneta's mourn.
There was a silence, while the altar's blaze
Was fainting for sweet food: I look'd thereon,
And on the paved floor, where nigh were piled
Faggots of cinnamon, and many heaps
Of other crisped spice-wood; then again
I look'd upon the altar, and its horns
Whiten'd with ashes, and its lang'rous flame,
And then upon the offerings again;
And so by turns, till sad Moneta cried,
'The sacrifice is done, but not the less
Will I be kind to thee for thy good will.

My power, which to me is still a curse,
Shall be to thee a wonder; for the scenes
Still swooning vivid through my globed brain,
With an electral changing misery,
Thou shalt with these dull mortal eyes behold,
Free from all pain, if wonder pain thee not.'
As near as an immortal's sphered words
Could to a mother's soften, were these last:
But yet I had a terror of her robes,
And chiefly of the veils, that from her brow
Hung pale, and curtain'd her in mysteries,
That made my heart too small to hold its blood.
This saw that Goddess, and with sacred hand
Parted the veils. Then saw I a wan face,
Not pin'd by human sorrows, but bright-blanch'd
By an immortal sickness which kills not;
It works a constant change, which happy death
Can put no end to; deathwards progressing
To no death was that visage; it had past
The lily and the snow; and beyond these
I must not think now, though I saw that face—
But for her eyes I should have fled away.
They held me back, with a benignant light,
Soft mitigated by divinest lids
Half-closed, and visionless entire they seem'd
Of all external things; they saw me not,
But in blank splendor, beam'd like the mild moon,
Who comforts those she sees not, who knows not
What eyes are upward cast. As I had found
A grain of gold upon a mountain's side,
And twing'd with avarice strain'd out my eyes
To search its sullen entrails rich with ore,
So at the view of sad Moneta's brow,
I ached to see what things the hollow brain
Behind enwombed: what high tragedy
In the dark secret chambers of her skull
Was acting, that could give so dread a stress
To her cold lips, and fill with such a light
Her planetary eyes; and touch her voice
With such a sorrow, 'Shade of Memory!'
Cried I, with act adorant at her feet,
'By all the gloom hung round thy fallen house,

By this last temple, by the golden age,
By great Apollo, thy dear foster child,
And by thyself, forlorn divinity,
The pale Omega of a withered race,
Let me behold, according as thou saidst,
What in thy brain so ferments to and fro!
No sooner had this conjuration pass'd
My devout lips, than side by side we stood
(Like a stunt bramble by a solemn pine)
Deep in the shady sadness of a vale,
Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,
Far from the fiery noon and eve's one star.
Onward I look'd beneath the gloomy boughs,
And saw, what first I thought an image huge,
Like to the image pedestal'd so high
In Saturn's temple. Then Moneta's voice
Came brief upon mine ear, 'So Saturn sat
When he had lost his realms' whereon there grew
A power within me of enormous ken
To see as a god sees, and take the depth
Of things as nimbly as the outward eye
Can size and shape pervade. The lofty theme
At those few words hung vast before my mind,
With half-unravel'd web. I set myself
Upon an eagle's watch, that I might see,
And seeing ne'er forget. No stir of life
Was in this shrouded vale, not so much air
As in the zoning of a summer's day
Robs not one light seed from the feather'd grass,
But where the dead leaf fell there did it rest.
A stream went voiceless by, still deaden'd more
By reason of the fallen divinity
Spreading more shade; the Naiad 'mid her reeds
Prest her cold finger closer to her lips.

Along the margin sand large footmarks went
No farther than to where old Saturn's feet
Had rested, and there slept, how long a sleep!
Degraded, cold, upon the sodden ground
His old right hand lay nerveless, listless, dead,
Unsceptred; and his realmless eyes were clos'd,
While his bow'd head seem'd listening to the Earth,
His ancient mother, for some comfort yet.

It seem'd no force could wake him from his place;
But there came one who, with a kindred hand
Touch'd his wide shoulders after bending low
With reverence, though to one who knew it not.
Then came the griev'd voice of Mnemosyne,
And griev'd I hearken'd. 'That divinity
Whom thou saw'st step from yon forlornest wood,
And with slow pace approach our fallen King,
Is Thea, softest-natur'd of our brood.'
I mark'd the goddess in fair statuary
Surpassing wan Moneta by the head,
And in her sorrow nearer woman's tears.
There was a listening fear in her regard,
As if calamity had but begun;
As if the vanward clouds of evil days
Had spent their malice, and the sullen rear
Was with its stored thunder labouring up.
One hand she press'd upon that aching spot
Where beats the human heart, as if just there,
Though an immortal, she felt cruel pain;
The other upon Saturn's bended neck
She laid, and to the level of his hollow ear
Leaning with parted lips, some words she spake
In solemn tenor and deep organ tune;
Some mourning words, which in our feeble tongue
Would come in this-like accenting; how frail
To that large utterance of the early Gods!

'Saturn! look up—and for what, poor lost King?
I have no comfort for thee; no not one;
I cannot say, Wherefore thus sleepest thou?
For Heaven is parted from thee, and the earth
Knows thee not, so afflicted, for a God;
And Ocean too, with all its solemn noise,
Has from thy sceptre pass'd, and all the air
Is emptied of thine hoary majesty.
Thy thunder, captious at the new command,
Rumbles reluctant o'er our fallen house;
And thy sharp lightning, in unpracticed hands,
Scorches and burns our once serene domain.
With such remorseless speed still come new woes,
That unbelief has not a space to breathe.

Saturn! sleep on: Me thoughtless, why should I
Thus violate thy slumbrous solitude?
Why should I ope thy melancholy eyes?
Saturn, sleep on, while at thy feet I weep.'

As when upon a tranced summer-night
Forests, branch-charmed by the earnest stars
Dream, and so dream all night without a noise,
Save from one gradual solitary gust,
Swelling upon the silence; dying off;
As if the ebbing air had but one wave;
So came these words, and went; the while in tears
She prest her fair large forehead to the earth,
Just where her fallen hair might spread in curls
A soft and silken mat for Saturn's feet.
Long, long these two were postured motionless,
Like sculpture builded up upon the grave
Of their own power. A long awful time
I look'd upon them: still they were the same;
The frozen God still bending to the earth,
And the sad Goddess weeping at his feet,
Moneta silent. Without stay or prop,
But my own weak mortality, I bore
The load of this eternal quietude,
The unchanging gloom, and the three fixed shapes
Ponderous upon my senses, a whole moon.
For by my burning brain I measured sure
Her silver seasons shedded on the night,
And every day by day methought I grew
More gaunt and ghostly. Oftentimes I pray'd
Intense, that Death would take me from the vale
And all its burthens gasping with despair;
Of change, hour after hour I curs'd myself;
Until old Saturn rais'd his faded eyes,
And look'd around and saw his kingdom gone,
And all the gloom and sorrow of the place,
And that fair kneeling Goddess at his feet.
As the moist scent of flowers, and grass, and leaves,
Fills forest dells with a pervading air,
Known to the woodland nostrils, so the words
Of Saturn fill'd the mossy glooms around,
Even to the hollows of time-eaten oaks,

And to the windings of the foxes' holes,
With sad low tones, while thus he spake, and sent
Strange musings to the solitary Pan.
'Moan, brethren, moan; for we are swallow'd up
And buried from all Godlike exercise
Of influence benign on planets pale,
And peaceful sway above man's harvesting,
And all those acts which Deity supreme
Doth ease its heart of love in. Moan and wail,
Moan, brethren, moan; for lo, the rebel spheres
Spin round, the stars their ancient courses keep,
Clouds still with shadowy moisture haunt the earth,
Still suck their fill of light from sun and moon;
Still buds the tree, and still the sea-shores murmur.
There is no death in all the Universe,
No smell of death—there shall be death. Moan, moan
Moan, Cybele, moan; for thy pernicious babes
Have changed a god into an shaking palsy.
Moan, brethren, moan, for I have no strength left,
Weak as the reed, weak, feeble as my voice—
O, O, the pain, the pain of feebleness.
Moan, moan, for still I thaw; or give me help;
Throw down those imps, and give me victory.
Let me hear other groans, and trumpets blown
Of triumph calm, and hymns of festival,
From the gold peaks of heaven's high-piled clouds;
Voices of soft proclaim, and silver stir
Of strings in hollow shells; and there shall be
Beautiful things made new for the surprise
Of the sky-children.' So he feebly ceas'd,
With such a poor and sickly sounding pause,
Methought I heard some old man of the earth
Bewailing earthly loss; nor could my eyes
And ears act with that pleasant unison of sense
Which marries sweet sound with the grace of form.
And dolorous accent from a tragic harp
With large-limb'd visions. More I scrutinized:
Still fix'd he sat beneath the sable trees,
Whose arms spread straggling in wild serpent forms,
With leaves all hush'd; his awful presence there
(Now all was silent) gave a deadly lie
To what I erewhile heard; only his lips

Trembled amid the white curls of his beard.
They told the truth, though, round, the snowy locks
Hung nobly, as upon the face of heaven
A mid-day fleece of clouds. Thea arose,
And stretched her white arm through the hollow dark,
Pointing some whither: whereat he too rose
Like a vast giant, seen by men at sea
To grow pale from the waves at dull midnight.
They melted from my sight into the woods;
Ere I could turn, Moneta cried, 'These twain
Are speeding to the families of grief,
Where roof'd in by black rocks they waste, in pain
And darkness, for no hope.' And she spake on,
As ye may read who can unwearied pass
Onward from th' Antichamber of this dream,
Where even at the open doors awhile
I must delay, and glean my memory
Of her high phrase: perhaps no further dare.

CANTO 2

'MORTAL, that thou may'st understand aright,
I humanize my sayings to thine ear,
Making comparisons of earthly things;
Or thou might'st better listen to the wind,
Whose language is to thee a barren noise,
Though it blows legend-laden thro' the trees.
In melancholy realms big tears are shed,
More sorrow like to this, and such like woe,
Too huge for mortal tongue, or pen of scribe.
The Titans fierce, self-hid or prison-bound,
Groan for the old allegiance once more,
Listening in their doom for Saturn's voice.
But one of our whole eagle-brood still keeps
His sov'reignty, and rule, and majesty;
Blazing Hyperion on his orb'd fire
Still sits, still snuffs the incense teeming up
From Man to the Sun's God: yet unsecure.
For as upon the earth dire prodigies
Fright and perplex, so also shudders he:
Nor at dog's howl or gloom-bird's even screech,
Or the familiar visitings of one

Upon the first toll of his passing bell:
But horrors portioned to a giant nerve
Make great Hyperion ache. His palace bright,
Bastion'd with pyramids of glowing gold,
And touch'd with shade of bronzed obelisks,
Glares a blood-red thro' all the thousand courts,
Arches, and domes, and fiery galleries:
And all its curtains of Aurorian clouds
Flush angrily; when he would taste the wreaths
Of incense breathed aloft from sacred hills,
Instead of sweets, his ample palate takes
Savour of poisonous brass and metals sick.
Wherefore when harbour'd in the sleepy west,
After the full completion of fair day,
For rest divine upon exalted couch
And slumber in the arms of melody,
He paces through the pleasant hours of ease
With strides colossal, on from hall to hall;
While far within each aisle and deep recess
His winged minions in close clusters stand
Amaz'd, and full of fear; like anxious men,
Who on a wide plain gather in sad troops,
When earthquakes jar their battlements and towers.
Even now, while Saturn, roused from icy trance,
Goes, step for step, with Thea from yon woods,
Hyperion, leaving twilight in the rear,
Is sloping to the threshold of the west.
Thither we tend.' Now in clear light I stood,
Reliev'd from the dusk vale. Mnemosyne
Was sitting on a square-edg'd polish'd stone,
That in its lucid depth reflected pure
Her priestess-garments. My quick eyes ran on
From stately nave to nave, from vault to vault,
Through bow'rs of fragrant and enwreathed light
And diamond-paved lustrous long arcades.
Anon rush'd by the bright Hyperion;
His flaming robes stream'd out beyond his heels,
And gave a roar, as if of earthly fire,
That scared away the meek ethereal hours,
And made their dove-wings tremble. On he flared.

THE CAP AND BELLS
OR THE JEALOUSIES

A FAERY TALE – UNFINISHED

NOTE TO THE CAP AND BELLS

THIS late production is called by Edward Thomas 'a vile failure,' and D. G. Rossetti had thought so too. In spite of its rambling and perhaps because of it it seems a clever fairy-tale, with all the ingenuity in the details that the Munchausen-minded could wish. Considering how Keats's light was spent when it was written its sparklings are frequent and gay. Its satirical object is not obvious, but it would never have been solemn satire; Keats with Brown's help plays on the characteristics of the Regency, and graphically takes us into the London he lived in.

The poem itself is in the fashion of the day. Keats knew Wieland's 'Oberon' in the English version of William Sotheby, and may have read other fantastical burlesques like William Tennant's 'Anster Fair' and J. H. Frere's 'The Monks and the Giants,' to say nothing of Byron's 'Beppo.' In truth the Romantic period was fertile in gaieties as well as gravities. Charles Lamb's dry saying 'There's a great deal of fun in Coleridge' could be well applied to it all.

Keats proposed to print the poem as 'by Lucy Vaughan Lloyd, of China Walk, Lambeth'—an imaginary suburban poetess, though China Walk was real.

The Cap and Bells

IN midmost Ind, beside Hydaspes cool,
There stood, or hover'd, tremulous in the air,
A faery city, 'neath the potent rule
Of Emperor Elfinan; fam'd everywhere
For love of mortal women, maidens fair,
Whose lips were solid, whose soft hands were made
Of a fit mould and beauty, ripe and rare,
To pamper his slight wooing, warm yet staid:
He lov'd girls smooth as shades, but hated a mere shade.

This was a crime forbidden by the law;
And all the priesthood of his city wept,
For ruin and dismay they well foresaw,
If impious prince no bound or limit kept,
And faery Zendervester overstept;
They wept, he sin'd, and still he would sin on,
They dreamt of sin, and he sin'd while they slept;
In vain the pulpit thunder'd at the throne,
Caricature was vain, and vain the tart lampoon.

Which seeing, his high court of parliament
Laid a remonstrance at his Highness' feet,
Praying his royal senses to content
Themselves with what in faery land was sweet,
Befitting best that shade with shade should meet:
Whereat, to calm their fears, he promis'd soon
From mortal tempters all to make retreat,—
Aye, even on the first of the new moon,
An immaterial wife to espouse as heaven's boon.

Meantime he sent a fluttering embassy
To Pigmio, of Imaus sovereign,
To half beg, and half demand, respectfully,
The hand of his fair daughter Bellanaine;
An audience had, and speeching done, they gain
Their point, and bring the weeping bride away;
Whom, with but one attendant, safely lain
Upon their wings, they bore in bright array,
While little harps were touch'd by many a lyric fay.

As in old pictures tender cherubim
 A child's soul thro' the sapphir'd canvas bear,*
 So, thro' a real heaven, on they swim
 With the sweet princess on her plumag'd lair,
 Speed giving to the winds her lustrous hair;
 And so she journey'd, sleeping or awake,
 Save when, for healthful exercise and air,
 She chose to *promener à l'aile*, or take
 pigeon's somerset, for sport or change's sake.

'Dear Princess, do not whisper me so loud,'
 Quoth Corallina, nurse and confidant,
 'Do not you see there, lurking in a cloud,
 Close at your back, that sly old Crafticant?
 He hears a whisper plainer than a rant:
 Dry up your tears, and do not look so blue;
 He's Elfinan's great state-spy militant,
 His running, lying, flying foot-man too,—
 Dear mistress, let him have no handle against you!

'Show him a mouse's tail, and he will guess,
 With metaphysic swiftness, at the mouse;
 Show him a garden, and with speed no less,
 He'll surmise sagely of a dwelling house,
 And plot, in the same minute, how to chouse
 The owner out of it; show him a'— 'Peace!
 Peace! nor contrive thy mistress' ire to rouse!
 Return'd the Princess, 'my tongue shall not cease
 Till from this hated match I get a free release.

'Ah, beauteous mortal!' 'Hush!' quoth Coralline,
 'Really you must not talk of him, indeed.'
 'You hush!' replied the mistress, with a shine
 Of anger in her eyes, enough to breed
 In stouter hearts than nurse's fear and dread:
 'Twas not the glance itself made nursey flinch,
 But of its threat she took the utmos' heed;
 Not liking in her heart an hour-long pinch,
 Or a sharp needle run into her back an inch.

* As in old Pictures Cherubs bear aloft
 The souls of children *Holograph*, rejected

So she was silenc'd, and fair Bellanaine,
Writhing her little body with ennui,
Continued to lament and to complain,
That Fate, cross-purposing, should let her be
Ravish'd away far from her dear countree;
That all her feelings should be set at naught,
In trumping up this match so hastily,
With lowland blood; and lowland blood she thought
Poison, as every staunch true-born Imaian ought.

Sorely she griev'd, and wetted three or four
White Provence rose-leaves with her faery tears,
But not for this cause; alas! she had more
Bad reasons for her sorrow, as appears
In the fam'd memoirs of a thousand years,
Written by Crafticant, and published
By Parpaglion and Co., (those sly compeers
Who rak'd up ev'ry fact against the dead,)
In Scarab Street, Panthea, at the Jubal's Head;

Where, after a long hypercritic howl
Against the vicious manners of the age
He goes on to expose, with heart and soul,
What vice in this or that year was the rage,
Backbiting all the world in every page;
With special strictures on the horrid crime,
(Section'd and subsection'd with learning sage,)
Of faeries stooping on their wings sublime
To kiss a mortal's lips, when such were in their prime.

Turn to the copious index, you will find
Somewhere in the column headed letter B
The name of Bellanaine, if you're not blind;
Then pray refer to the text, and you will see
An article made up of calumny
Against this highland princess, rating her
For giving way, so over fashionably,
To this new-fangled vice, which seems a burr
Stuck in his moral throat, no coughing e'er could stir.

There he says plainly that she lov'd a man!
That she around him flutter'd, flirted, toy'd,

Before her marriage with great Elfinan;
 That after marriage too, she never joy'd
 In husband's company, but still employ'd
 Her wits to 'scape away to Angle-land;
 Where liv'd the youth, who worried and annoy'd
 Her tender heart, and its warm ardours fann'd
 To such a dreadful blaze, her side would scorch her hand.

But let us leave this idle tittle-tattle
 To waiting-maids, and bed-room coteries,
 Nor till fit time against her fame wage battle.
 Poor Elfinan is very ill at ease,
 Let us resume his subject if you please:
 For it may comfort and console him much
 To rhyme and syllable his miseries;
 Poor Elfinan! whose cruel fate was such,
 He sat and curs'd a bride he knew he could not touch.

Soon as (according to his promises)
 The bridal embassy had taken wing,
 And vanish'd, bird-like, o'er the suburb trees,
 The Emperor, empierc'd with the sharp sting
 Of love, retired, vex'd and murmuring
 Like any drone shut from the fair bee-queen,
 Into his cabinet, and there did fling
 His limbs upon a sofa, full of spleen,
 And damn'd his House of Commons, in complete chagrin.

'I'll trounce some of the members,' cried the Prince,
 'I'll put a mark against some rebel names,
 I'll make the Opposition-benches wince,
 I'll show them very soon, to all their shames,
 What 'tis to smother up a Prince's flames;
 That ministers should join in it, I own,
 Surprises me! they too at these high games!
 Am I an Emperor? Do I wear a crown?
 Imperial Elfinan, go hang thyself or drown!

'I'll trounce 'em! there's the square-cut chancellor,
 His son shall never touch that bishopric;
 And for the nephew of old Palfior,
 I'll show him that his speech has made me sick,

And give the colonelcy to Phalaric;
The tiptoe marquis, moral and gallant,
Shall lodge in shabby taverns upon tick;
And for the Speaker's second cousin's aunt,
She sha'n't be maid of honour, by heaven that she sha'n't!

'I'll shirk the Duke of A.; I'll cut his brother;
I'll give no garter to his eldest son;
I won't speak to his sister or his mother!
The Viscount B. shall live at cut-and-run;
But how in the world can I contrive to stun
That fellow's voice, which plagues me worse than any,
That stubborn fool, that impudent state-dun,
Who sets down ev'ry sovereign as a zany,—
That vulgar commoner, Esquire Biancopany?

'Monstrous affair! Pshaw! pah! what ugly minx
Will they fetch from Imaus for my bride?
Alas! my wearied heart within me sinks,
To think that I must be so near allied
To a cold dullard fay,—ah, woe betide!
Ah, fairest of all human loveliness!
Sweet Bertha! what crime can it be to glide
About the fragrant pleatings of thy dress,
Or kiss thine eyes, or count thy locks, tress after tress?'

So said, one minute's while his eyes remain'd *
Half lidded, piteous, languid, innocent;
But, in a wink, their splendour they regain'd,
Sparkling revenge with amorous fury blent.
Love thwarted in bad temper oft has vent:
He rose, he stamp'd his foot, he rang the bell,
And order'd some death-warrants to be sent
For signature: somewhere the tempest fell,
As many a poor felon does not live to tell.

'At the same time Eban,' (this was his page,
A fay of colour, slave from top to toe,
Sent as a present, while yet under age,
From the Viceroy of Zanguebar,—wise, slow,

* So saying his eyes one minute's while were soft — *Holograph, rejected*

His speech, his only words were 'yes' and 'no,'
But swift of look, and foot, and wing was he,)
'At the same time, Eban, this instant go
To Hum the soothsayer, whose name I see
Among the fresh arrivals in our empery.
'Bring Hum to me! But stay—here, take my ring,
The pledge of favour, that he not suspect
Any foul play, or awkward murdering,
Tho' I have bowstrung many of his sect;
Throw in a hint, that if he should neglect
One hour, the next shall see him in my grasp,
And the next after that shall see him neck'd,
Or swallow'd by my hunger-starved asp,—
And mention ('tis as well) the torture of the wasp.'

These orders given, the Prince, in half a pet,
Let o'er the silk his propping elbow slide,
Caught up his little legs, and, in a fret,
Fell on the sofa on his royal side.
The slave retreated backwards, humble-eyed,
And with a slave-like silence clos'd the door,
And to old Hum thro' street and alley hied;
He 'knew the city,' as we say, of yore,
And for short cuts and turns, was nobody knew more.

It was the time when wholesale houses close
Their shutters with a moody sense of wealth,
But retail dealers, diligent, let loose
The gas (objected to on score of health),
Convey'd in little solder'd pipes by stealth,
And make it flare in many a brilliant form,
That all the powers of darkness it repell'th,
Which to the oil-trade doth great scaith and harm,
And supersedeth quite the use of the glow-worm.

Eban, untempted by the pastry-cooks;
(Of pastry he got store within the palace,)
With hasty steps, wrapp'd cloak, and solemn looks,
Incognito upon his errand sallies,
His smelling-bottle ready for the allies;
He pass'd the Hurdy-gurdies with disdain,
Vowing he'd have them sent aboard the gallies;

Just as he made his vow, it 'gan to rain,
Therefore he call'd a coach, and bade it drive amain.

'I'll pull the string,' said he, and further said,
'Polluted Jarvey! Ah, thou filthy hack!
Whose springs of life are all dried up and dead,
Whose linsey-woolsey lining hangs all slack,
Whose rug is straw, whose wholeness is a crack;
And evermore thy steps go clatter-clitter;
Whose glass once up can never be got back,
Who prov'st, with jolting arguments and bitter,
That 'tis of modern use to travel in a litter.

'Thou inconvenience! thou hungry crop
For all corn! thou snail-creeper to and fro,
Who while thou goest ever seem'st to stop,
And fiddle-faddle standest while you go:
I' the morning, freighted with a weight of woe,
Unto some lazar-house thou journeyest,
And in the evening tak'st a double row
Of dowdies, for some dance or party drest,
Besides the goods meanwhile thou movest east and west.

'By thy ungallant bearing and sad mien,
An inch appears the utmost thou couldst budge;
Yet at the slightest nod, or hint, or sign,
Round to the curb-stone patient dost thou trudge,
School'd in a beckon, learned in a nudge, *
A dull-eyed Argus watching for a fare;
Quiet and plodding, thou dost bear no grudge
To whisking Tilburies, or Phaetons rare,
Curricles, or Mail-coaches, swift beyond compare.' †

* As courteous to a Cobler as a Judge – *MS., cancelled.*

† The following stanza is cancelled in the *MS.*

'Ho! Ho thought Eban so this Signor Hum
A conversazione holds tonight
Whene'er he beats his literary drum
The learned muster round all right and tight
Drest in best black to talk by candle light.'
E'en while he thought, for eighteen penny fare
He paid a half penny by cunning sleight
Made argent; then with self-contented Air
Broke through the Crowd to Hums, and all the world was there.

Philosophizing thus, he pull'd the check,
 And bade the Coachman wheel to such a street,
 Who, turning much his body, more his neck,
 Louted full low, and hoarsely did him greet:
 'Certes, Monsieur were best take to his feet,
 Seeing his servant can no further drive
 For press of coaches, that to-night here meet
 Many as bees about a straw-capp'd hive,
 When first for April honey into faint flowers they dive.'

Eban then paid his fare, and tiptoe went
 To Hum's hotel; and, as he on did pass
 With head inclin'd, each dusky lineament
 Show'd in the pearl-pav'd street, as in a glass;
 His purple vest, that ever peeping was
 Rich from the fluttering crimson of his cloak,
 His silvery trowsers, and his silken sash
 Tied in a burnish'd knot, their semblance took
 Upon the mirror'd walls, wherever he might look.

He smil'd at self, and, smiling, show'd his teeth,
 And seeing his white teeth, he smil'd the more;
 Lifted his eye-brows, spurn'd the path beneath,
 Show'd teeth again, and smil'd as heretofore,
 Until he knock'd at the magician's door;
 Where, till the porter answer'd, might be seen,
 In the clear panel more he could adore,—
 His turban wreath'd of gold, and white, and green,
 Mustachios, ear-ring, nose-ring, and his sabre keen.

'Does not your master give a rout to-night?'
 Quoth the dark page. 'Oh, no!' return'd the Swiss,
 'Next door but one to us, upon the right,
 The *Magazin des Modes* now open is
 Against the Emperor's wedding; and, sir, this
 My master finds a monstrous horrid bore;
 As he retir'd, an hour ago I wis,
 With his best beard and brimstone, to explore
 And cast a quiet figure in his second floor.

'Gad! he's oblig'd to stick to business!
 For chalk, I hear, stands at a pretty price;

And as for aqua vitæ—there's a mess!
 The *dentes sapientiæ* of mice,
 Our barber tells me too, are on the rise,
 Tinder's a lighter article, nitre pure
 Goes off like lightning, grains of Paradise
 At an enormous figure! stars not sure!
 Zodiac will not move without a sly douceur!

'Venus won't stir a peg without a tee,
 And master is too partial, *entre nous*,
 To'— 'Hush hush!' cried Eban, 'sure that is he
 Coming down stairs, by St. Bartholomew!
 As backwards as he can, is 't something new?
 Or is't his custom, in the name of fun?'
 'He always comes down backward, with one shoe'
 Return'd the porter 'off, and one shoe on,
 Like, saving shoe for sock or stocking, my man John!'

It was indeed the great Magician,
 Feeling, with careful toe, for every stair,
 And retrograding careful as he can,
 Backwards and downwards from his own two pair:
 'Salpietro!' exclaim'd Hum, 'is the dog there? *'
 He's always in my way upon the mat!
 'He's in the kitchen, or the Lord knows where,'
 Replied the Swiss, 'the nasty, yelping brat!'
 'Don't beat him!' return'd Hum, and on the floor came pat.

Then facing right about, he saw the Page,
 And said: 'Don't tell me what you want, Eban;
 The Emperor is now in a huge rage,
 'Tis nine to one he'll give you the rattan!
 Let us away!' Away together ran
 The plain-dress'd sage and spangled blackamoor,
 Nor rested till they stood to cool, and fan,
 And breathe themselves at the Emperor's chamber door,
 When Eban thought he heard a soft imperial snore.

'I thought you guess'd, foretold, or prophesied,
 That's Majesty was in a raving fit?'
 'He dreams,' said Hum, 'or I have ever lied,

* [yelping] whelping – MS. and Houghton.

That he is tearing you, sir, bit by bit.'
'He's not asleep, and you have little wit,'
Replied the page: 'that little buzzing noise,
Whate'er your palmistry may make of it,
Comes from a play-thing of the Emperor's choice,
From a Man-Tiger-Organ, prettiest of his toys.'

Eban then usher'd in the learned Seer:
Elfinan's back was turn'd, but, ne'ertheless,
Both, prostrate on the carpet, ear by ear,
Crept silently, and waited in distress,
Knowing the Emperor's moody bitterness;
Eban especially, who on the floor 'gan
Tremble and quake to death,—he feared less
A dose of senna-tea or nightmare Gorgon
Than the Emperor when he play'd on his Man-Tiger-Organ.

They kiss'd nine times the carpet's velvet face
Of glossy silk, soft, smooth, and meadow-green,
Where the close eye in deep rich fur might trace
A silver tissue, scanty to be seen,
As daisies lurk'd in June-grass, buds in treen;
Sudden the music ceased, sudden the hand
Of majesty, by dint of passion keen,
Doubled into a common fist, went grand,
And knock'd down three cut glasses, and his best ink-stand

Then turning round, he saw those trembling two:
'Eban,' said he, 'as slaves should taste the fruits
Of diligence, I shall remember you
To-morrow, or the next day, as time suits,
In a finger conversation with my mutes,—
Begone! for you, Chaldean! here remain!
Fear not, quake not, and as good wine recruits
A conjurer's spirits, what cup will you drain?
Sherry in silver, hock in gold, or glass'd champagne?'

'Commander of the Faithful!' answer'd Hum,
'In preference to these, I'll merely taste
A thimble-full of old Jamaica rum.'
'A simple boon!' said Elfinan; 'thou may'st
Have Nantz, with which my morning-coffee's lac'd.'

'I'll have a glass of Nantz, then,' said the Seer,
'Made racy (sure my boldness is misplac'd!)
With the third part (yet that is drinking dear!)
Of the least drop of *crème de citron*, crystal clear.'

'I pledge you, Hum! and pledge my dearest love,
My Bertha!' 'Bertha! Bertha!' cried the sage,
'I know a many Berthas!' 'Mine's above
All Berthas!' sighed the Emperor. 'I engage,'
Said Hum, 'in duty, and in vassalage,
To mention all the Berthas in the Earth;—
There's Bertha Watson, and Miss Bertha Page,
This fam'd for languid eyes, and that for mirth,
There's Bertha Blount of York, and Bertha Knox of Perth.'

'You seem to know'—'I do know,' answer'd Hum,
'Your Majesty's in love with some fine girl
Named Bertha; but her surname will not come,
Without a little conjuring.' "'Tis Pearl,
'Tis Bertha Pearl that makes my brain so whirl;
And she is softer, fairer than her name!'
'Where does she live?' ask'd Hum. 'Her fair locks curl
So brightly, they put all our fays to shame!
Live? O! at Canterbury, with her old grand-dame.'

'Good! good!' cried Hum, 'I've known her from a child!
She is a changeling of my management;
She was born at midnight in an Indian wild;
Her mother's screams with the striped tiger's blent,
While the torch-bearing slaves a halloo sent
Into the jungles; and her palanquin,
Rested amid the desert's dreariment,
Shook with her agony, till fair were seen
The little Bertha's eyes oped on the stars serene.'

'I can't say,' said the monarch; 'that may be
Just as it happen'd, true or else a bam!
Drink up your brandy, and sit down by me,
Feel, feel my pulse, how much in love I am;
And if your science is not all a sham,
Tell me some means to get the lady here.'
'Upon my honour!' said the son of Cham,

'She is my dainty changeling, near and dear,
Although her story sounds at first a little queer.'

'Convey her to me, Hum, or by my crown,
My sceptre, and my cross-surmounted globe,
I'll knock you'—'Does your majesty mean—*down*?
No, no, you never could my feelings probe
To such a depth!' The Emperor took his robe,
And wept upon its purple palatine,
While Hum continued, shamming half a sob,
'In Canterbury doth your lady shine?
But let me cool your brandy with a little wine.'

Whereat a narrow Flemish glass he took,
That once belong'd to Admiral de Witt,
Admir'd it with a connoisseuring look,
And with the ripest claret crowned it,
And, ere one lively bead could burst and flit,
He turn'd it quickly, nimbly upside down,
His mouth being held conveniently fit
To catch the treasure: 'Best in all the town!'
He said, smack'd his moist lips, and gave a pleasant frown.

'Ah! good my Prince, weep not!' And then again
He fill'd a bumper. 'Great Sire, do not weep!
Your pulse is shocking, but I'll ease your pain.'
'Fetch me that Ottoman, and prithee keep
Your voice low,' said the Emperor; 'and steep
Some lady's-fingers nice in Candy wine;
And prithee, Hum, behind the screen do peep
For the rose-water vase, magician mine!
And sponge my forehead,—so my love doth make me pine.

'Ah, cursed Bellanaine!' 'Don't think of her,'
Rejoin'd the Mago, 'but on Bertha muse;
For, by my choicest best barometer,
You shall not throttled be in marriage noose;
I've said it, Sire; you only have to choose
Bertha or Bellanaine.' So saying, he drew
From the left pocket of his threadbare hose,
A sampler hoarded slyly, good as new,
Holding it by his thumb and finger full in view.

'Sire, this is Bertha Pearl's neat handy-work,
 Her *name*, see here, *Midsummer, ninety-one*.'
 Elfinan snatch'd it with a sudden jerk,
 And wept as if he never would have done,
 Honouring with royal tears the poor homespun;
 Whereon were broider'd tigers with black eyes,
 And long-tail'd pheasants, and a rising sun,
 Plenty of posies, great stags, butterflies
 Bigger than stags, a moon, with other mysteries.

The monarch handled o'er and o'er again
 These day-school hieroglyphics with a sigh; *
 Somewhat in sadness, but pleas'd in the main,
 Till this oracular couplet met his eye
 Astounded *Cupid I, do thee defy!*
 It was too much. He shrunk back in his chair,
 Grew pale as death, and fainted—very nigh!
 'Pho! nonsense!' exclaim'd Hum, 'now don't despair;
 She does not mean it really. Cheer up hearty there!

'And listen to my words. You say you won't,
 On any terms, marry Miss Bellanaine;
 It goes against your conscience—good! Well, don't.
 You say you love a mortal. I would fain
 Persuade your honour's highness to refrain
 From peccadilloes. But, Sire, as I say,
 What good would that do? And, to be more plain,
 You would do me a mischief some odd day,
 Cut off my ears and hands, or head too, by my fay!

'Besides, manners forbid that I should pass any
 Vile strictures on the conduct of a prince
 Who should indulge his genius, if he has any,
 Not, like a subject, foolish matters mince.

* In the MS. the first word of line 2 is unquestionably These: the Those of the Houghton text is likely to be unauthorized. In line 5 the 'oracular couplet' has the comma after I instead of after Cupid as in the Houghton text. Keats's own punctuation preserves what we editors failed to bring out, that Bertha's sampler made two lines of her defiance—

Now I think on't, perhaps I could convince
 Your Majesty there is no crime at all
 In loving pretty little Bertha, since
 She's very delicate, not over tall,
 A fairy's hand, and in the waist, why—very small.'

'Ring the repeater, gentle Hum!' "'Tis five,'
 Said gentle Hum; 'the nights draw in apace;
 The little birds I hear are all alive;
 I see the dawning touch'd upon your face;
 Shall I put out the candles, please your Grace?'
 'Do put them out, and, without more ado,
 Tell me how I may that sweet girl embrace,
 How you can bring her to me.' 'That's for you,
 Great Emperor! to adventure, like a lover true.'

'I fetch her!' 'Yes, an't like your Majesty;
 And as she would be frighten'd wide awake
 To travel such a distance through the sky,
 Use of some soft manœuvre you must make,
 For your convenience, and her dear nerves' sake;
 Nice way would be to bring her in a swoon,
 Anon, I'll tell what course were best to take;
 You must away this morning.' 'Hum! so soon?'
 'Sire, you must be in Kent by twelve o'clock at noon.'

At this great Cæsar started on his feet,
 Lifted his wings, and stood attentive-wise.
 'Those wings to Canterbury you must beat,
 If you hold Bertha as a worthy prize.
 Look in the Almanack—*Moore* never lies—
 April the twenty-fourth,—this coming day,
 Now breathing its new bloom upon the skies, *
 Will end in St. Mark's Eve; you must away,
 For on that eve alone can you the maid convey.'

* Now spreading its yo[u]ng bloom upon the sky, — *MS., rejected.*

Two rejected readings in this stanza are of unusual interest:

April the twenty fifth this very morn
 Is sacred to St. Mark

and

Ends quiet n St. Agnes E[ve].

Then the magician solemnly 'gan frown,
So that his frost-white eyebrows, beetling low,
Shaded his deep-green eyes, and wrinkles brown
Plaited upon his furnace-scorched brow:
Forth from the hood that hung his neck below,
He lifted a bright casket of pure gold,
Touch'd a spring-lock, and there in wool, or snow
Charm'd into ever-freezing, lay an old
And legend-leaved book, mysterious to behold.

'Take this same book,—it will not bite you, Sire;
There, put it underneath your royal arm;
Though it's a pretty weight it will not tire,
But rather on your journey keep you warm:
This is the magic, this the potent charm,
That shall drive Bertha to a fainting fit!
When the time comes, don't feel the least alarm,
Uplift her from the ground, and swiftly flit
Back to your palace, where I wait for guerdon fit.'

'What shall I do with this same book?' 'Why merely
Lay it on Bertha's table, close beside
Her work-box, and 'twill help your purpose dearly;
I say no more.' 'Or good or ill betide,
Through the wide air to Kent this morn I glide!'
Exclaim'd the Emperor. 'When I return,
Ask what you will,—I'll give you my new bride!
And take some more wine, Hum; O Heavens! I burn
To be upon the wing! Now, now, that minx I spurn!'

'Leave her to me,' rejoin'd the magian:
'But how shall I account, illustrious fay!
For thine imperial absence? Pho! I can
Say you are very sick, and bar the way
To your so loving courtiers for one day;
If either of their two archbishops' graces
Should talk of extreme unction, I shall say
You do not like cold pig with Latin phrases,
Which never should be used but in alarming cases.'

'Open the window, Hum; I'm ready now!'
'Zooks!' exclaim'd Hum, as up the sash he drew,

'Behold, your Majesty, upon the brow
Of yonder hill, what crowds of people!' 'Whew!
The monster's always after something new,'
Return'd his Highness, 'they are piping hot
To see my pigsny Bellanaine. Hum! do
Tighten my belt a little,—so, so,—not
Too tight,—the book!—my wand! so, nothing is forgot.'

'Wounds! how they shout!' said Hum, 'and there, see, see!
The Ambassadors return'd from Pigmio!
The morning's very fine,—uncommonly!
See, past the skirts of yon white cloud they go,
Tinging it with soft crimsons! Now below
The sable-pointed heads of firs and pines *
They dip, move on, and with them moves a glow †
Along the forest side! Now amber lines
Reach the hill top, and now throughout the valley shines.'

'Why, Hum, you're getting quite poetical!
Those *nows* you managed in a special style.'
'If ever you have leisure, Sire, you shall
See scraps of mine will make it worth your while,
Tit-bits for Phœbus! yes, you well may smile.
Hark! Hah! the bells!' 'A little further yet,
Good Hum, and let me view this mighty coil.'
Then the great Emperor full graceful set
His elbow for a prop, and snuff'd his mignonnette.

The morn is full of holiday; loud bells
With rival clamours ring from every spire;
Cunningly-station'd music dies and swells
In echoing places; when the winds respire,
Light flags stream out like gauzy tongues of fire;
A metropolitan murmur, lifeful, warm,
Comes from the northern suburbs; rich attire
Freckles with red and gold the moving swarm;
While here and there clear trumpets blow a keen alarm.

And now the fairy escort was seen clear,
Like the old pageant of Aurora's train,

* The sable heads of pointed firs and pines – MS., rejected.

† They dip and fill the forest with a glow – MS., cancelled.

Above a pearl-built minster, hovering near;
First wily Crafticant, the chamberlain,
Balanc'd upon his grey-grown pinions twain,
His slender wand officially reveal'd;
Then black gnomes scattering sixpences like rain;
Then pages three and three; and next, slave-held,
The Imaian 'scutcheon bright,—one mouse in argent field.

Gentlemen pensioners next; and after them,
A troop of winged Janizaries flew;
Then Slaves, as presents bearing many a gem;
Then twelve physicians fluttering two and two;
And next a chaplain in a cassock new;
Then Lords in waiting; then (what head not reels
For pleasure?) the fair Princess in full view,
Borne upon wings, and very pleas'd she feels
To have such splendour dance attendance at her heels.

For there was more magnificence behind:
She wav'd her handkerchief. 'Ah, very grand!'
Cried Elfinan, and clos'd the window-blind;
'And, Hum, we must not shilly-shally stand,—
Adieu! adieu! I'm off for Angle-land!
I say, old Hocus, have you such a thing
About you,—feel your pockets, I command,—
I want, this instant, an invisible ring,—
Thank you, old mummy! now securely I take wing.'

Then Elfinan swift vaulted from the floor,
And lighted graceful on the window-sill;
Under one arm the magic book he bore,
The other he could wave about at will;
Pale was his face, he still look'd very ill:
He bow'd at Bellanaine, and said 'Poor Bell!
Farewell! farewell! and if for ever! still
For ever fare thee well!' — and then he fell
A laughing! snapp'd his fingers! shame it is to tell!

'By'r Lady! he is gone!' cries Hum, 'and I
(I own it) have made too free with his wine;
Old Crafticant will smoke me. By the bye,
This room is full of jewels as a mine,—

Dear valuable creatures, how ye shine!
 Sometime to-day I must contrive a minute,
 If Mercury propitiously incline,
 To examine his scrutoire, and see what's in it,
 For of superfluous diamonds I as well may thin it.

'The Emperor's horrid bad; yes, that's my cue!
 Some histories say that this was Hum's last speech;
 That, being fuddled, he went reeling through
 The corridor, and scarce upright could reach
 The stair-head; that being glutted as a leech,
 And us'd, as we ourselves have just now said,
 To manage stairs reversely, like a peach
 Too ripe, he fell, being puzzled in his head
 With liquor and the staircase: verdict—*found stone dead.*

This as a falsehood Crafticanto treats;
 And as his style is of strange elegance,
 Gentle and tender, full of soft conceits,
 (Much like our Boswell's,) we will take a glance
 At his sweet prose, and, if we can, make dance
 His woven periods into careless rhyme;
 O, little faery Pegasus! rear, prance,
 Trot round the quarto—ordinary time!
 March, little Pegasus, with pawing hoof sublime!

Well, let us see, *tenth book and chapter nine*,
 Thus Crafticant pursues his diary:—
 "'Twas twelve o'clock at night, the weather fine,
 Latitude thirty-six; our scouts descry
 A flight of starlings making rapidly
 Towards Thibet. Mem.: birds fly in the night;
 From twelve to half-past—wings not fit to fly
 For a thick fog—the Princess sulky quite
 Call'd for an extra shawl, and gave her nurse a bite.

'Five minutes before one—brought down a moth
 With my new double-barrel—stew'd the thighs
 And made a very tolerable broth—
 Princess turn'd dainty; to our great surprise,
 Alter'd her mind, and thought it very nice:
 Seeing her pleasant, tried her with a pun,

She frown'd; a monstrous owl across us flies
About this time,—a sad old figure of fun;
Bad omen—this new match can't be a happy one.

'From two till half-past, dusky way we made,
Above the plains of Gobi, desert, bleak.
Beheld afar off, in the hooded shade
Of darkness, a great mountain (strange to speak),
Spitting, from forth its sulphur-baken peak,
A fan-shap'd burst of blood-red, arrowy fire,
Turban'd with smoke, which still away did reek,
Solid and black from that eternal pyre,
Upon the laden wind that scanty could respire.

'Just upon three o'clock a falling star
Created an alarm among our troop,
Kill'd a man-cook, a page, and broke a jar,
A tureen, and three dishes, at one swoop,
Then passing by the Princess, singed her hoop:
Could not conceive what Coralline was at,
She clapp'd her hands three times and cried out "Whoop!"
Some strange Imaian custom. A large bat
Came sudden 'fore my face, and brush'd against my hat.

'Five minutes thirteen seconds after three,
Far in the west a mighty fire broke out,
Conjectur'd, on the instant, it might be
The city of Balk—'twas Balk beyond all doubt:
A Griffin, wheeling here and there about,
Kept reconnoitring us—doubled our guard—
Lighted our torches, and kept up a shout,
Till he sheer'd off—the Princess very scar'd—
And many on their marrow-bones for death prepar'd.

'At half-past three arose the cheerful moon—
Bivouack'd for four minutes on a cloud—
Where from the earth we heard a lively tune
Of tambourines and pipes, serene and loud,
While on a flowery lawn a brilliant crowd
Cinque-parted danc'd, some half asleep reposed
Beneath the green-fan'd cedars, some did shroud
In silken tents, and 'mid light fragrance dozed,
Or on the open turf their soothed eyelids closed.

'Dropp'd my gold watch, and kill'd a kettledrum—
It went for apoplexy—foolish folks!—
Left it to pay the piper—a good sum—
(I've got a conscience, maugre people's jokes;)
To scrape a little favour 'gan to coax
Her Highness' pug-dog—got a sharp rebuff—
She wish'd a game at whist—made three revokes—
Turn'd from myself, her partner, in a huff;
His majesty will know her temper time enough.

'She cried for chess—I play'd a game with her—
Castled her king with such a vixen look,
It bodes ill to his Majesty (refer
To the second chapter of my fortieth book,
And see what hoity-toity airs she took).
At half-past four the morn essay'd to beam—
Saluted, as we pass'd, an early rook—
The Princess fell asleep, and, in her dream,
Talk'd of one Master Hubert, deep in her esteem.

'About this time, making delightful way,
Shed a quill-feather from my larboard wing—
Wish'd, trusted, hop'd 'twas no sign of decay—
Thank heaven, I'm hearty yet! 'twas no such thing:—
At five the golden light began to spring,
With fiery shudder through the bloomed east;
At six we heard Panthea's churches ring—
The city all her unhiv'd swarms had cast,
To watch our grand approach, and hail us as we pass'd.

'As flowers turn their faces to the sun,
So on our flight with hungry eyes they gaze,
And, as we shap'd our course, this, that way run,
With mad-cap pleasure, or hand-clasp'd amaze;
Sweet in the air a mild-ton'd music plays,
And progresses through its own labyrinth;
Buds gather'd from the green spring's middle-days,
They scatter'd,—daisy, primrose, hyacinth,—
Or round white columns wreath'd from capital to plinth.

'Onward we floated o'er the panting streets,
That seem'd throughout with upheld faces paved;

Look where we will, our bird's-eye vision meets
Legions of holiday; bright standards waved,
And fluttering ensigns emulously craved
Our minute's glance; a busy thunderous roar,
From square to square, among the buildings raved,
As when the sea, at flow, gluts up once more
The craggy hollowness of a wild reefed shore.

'And "Bellanaine for ever!" shouted they,
While that fair Princess, from her winged chair,
Bow'd low with high demeanour, and, to pay
Their new-blown loyalty with guerdon fair.
Still emptied, at meet distance, here and there,
A plenty horn of jewels. And here I
(Who wish to give the devil her due) declare
Against that ugly piece of calumny,
Which calls them Highland pebble-stones not worth a fly.

'Still "Bellanaine!" they shouted, while we glide
'Slant to a light Ionic portico,
The city's delicacy, and the pride
Of our Imperial Basilic; a row
Of lords and ladies, on each hand, make show
Submissive of knee-bent obeisance,
All down the steps; and, as we enter'd, lo!
The strangest sight—the most unlook'd-for chance—
All things turn'd topsy-turvy in a devil's dance.

"Stead of his anxious Majesty and court
At the open doors, with wide saluting eyes,
Congées and scape-graces of every sort,
And all the smooth routine of gallantries,
Was seen, to our immoderate surprise,
A motley crowd thick gather'd in the hall,
Lords, scullions, deputy-sculions, with wild cries
Stunning the vestibule from wall to wall,
Where the Chief Justice on his knees and hands doth crawl.

'Counts of the palace, and the state purveyor
Of moth's-down, to make soft the royal beds,
The Common Council and my fool Lord Mayor
Marching a-row, each other slipshod treads;

Powder'd bag-wigs and ruffy-tuffy heads
Of cinder wenches meet and soil each other;
Toe crush'd with heel ill-natur'd fighting breeds,
Frill-rumpling elbows brew up many a bother,
And fists in the short ribs keep up the yell and pother.

'A Poet, mounted on the Court-Clown's back,
Rode to the Princess swift with spurring heels,
And close into her face, with rhyming clack,
Began a Prothalamion; she reels,
She falls, she faints! while laughter peals
Over her woman's weakness. "Where!" cried I,
"Where is his Majesty?" No person feels
Inclin'd to answer; wherefore instantly
I plung'd into the crowd to find him or to die.

'Jostling my way I gain'd the stairs, and ran
To the first landing, where, incredible!
I met, far gone in liquor, that old man,
That vile impostor Hum,——'

So far so well,

For we have prov'd the Mago never fell
Down stairs on Crafticanto's evidence;
And therefore duly shall proceed to tell,
Plain in our own original mood and tense,
The sequel of this day, though labour 'tis immense!

THE EVE OF SAINT MARK

NOTE TO THE EVE OF SAINT MARK

ST. MARK's day is 25 April. Keats's intention in the poem, other than to 'give you the sensation of walking about an old country town in a coolish evening,' cannot be established beyond doubt; but it looks likely that Bertha was not described as deeply engrossed in the legend of St. Mark himself without a strong reason. 'The Evangelist and patron saint of Venice, was by birth a Jew, but becoming a convert to Christianity, he was sent by St. Peter into Egypt to propagate his new faith. During his residence at Alexandria the populace dragged him from the church and through the streets till he expired.' His bones were removed to Venice. When Keats was writing, that city and her associations had just been splendidly brought to the mind of English readers by the latest Canto of *Childe Harold* (1818).

But Keats was also considering the imaginative uses of our own popular beliefs touching St. Mark's Eve. John Brand's 'Popular Antiquities' was one source of the information. 'It is customary in Yorkshire for the common people to sit and watch in the church porch on St. Mark's Eve, from eleven o'clock at night till one in the morning. The third year (for this must be done thrice) they are supposed to see the ghosts of all those who are to die the next year pass by into the church.'

A still more attractive version of the superstition was written by John Clare from Northamptonshire. In that account, a girl who keeps the watch 'is to see a marriage procession pass by her, with a bride in her own likeness hanging on the arm of her future husband; as many bridesmen and maidens as appear to follow them, so many months is the maid to wait before her marriage. If she is to die unmarried, then the expected procession is to be a funeral, consisting of a coffin covered with a white sheet, borne on the shoulders of shadows that seem without heads.'

Keats has not described an illuminated manuscript of the middle ages with strictness, nor is his Middle English approved by philologists; he is satisfied with brilliant impression and with a Chattertonian skill in suggesting 'the rhyme' of Chaucer or Gower.

The Eve of Saint Mark

UPON a Sabbath-day it fell;
Twice holy was the Sabbath-bell,
That call'd the folk to evening prayer;
The city streets were clean and fair
From wholesome drench of April rains;
And, on the western window panes,
The chilly sunset faintly told
Of unmatur'd green vallies cold,
Of the green thorny bloomless hedge,
Of rivers new with spring-tide sedge,
Of primroses by shelter'd rills,
And daisies on the aguish hills.
Twice holy was the Sabbath-bell:
The silent streets were crowded well
With staid and pious companies,
Warm from their fire-side orat'ries;
And moving, with demurest air,
To even-song, and vesper prayer.
Each arched porch, and entry low,
Was fill'd with patient folk and slow,
With whispers hush, and shuffling feet,
While play'd the organ loud and sweet.

The bells had ceas'd, the prayers begun,
And Bertha had not yet half done
A curious volume, patch'd and torn,
That all day long, from earliest morn,
Had taken captive her two eyes,
Among its golden broideries;
Perplex'd her with a thousand things,—
The stars of Heaven, and angels' wings,
Martyrs in a fiery blaze,
Azure saints in silver rays,
Moses' breastplate, and the seven
Candlesticks John saw in Heaven,

The winged Lion of Saint Mark,
And the Covenantal Ark,
With its many mysteries,
Cherubim and golden mice.

Bertha was a maiden fair,
Dwelling in the old Minster-square;
From her fire-side she could see,
Sidelong, its rich antiquity,
Far as the Bishop's garden-wall;
Where sycamores and elm-trees tall,
Full-leav'd, the forest had outstript,
By no sharp north-wind ever nipt,
So shelter'd by the mighty pile.
Bertha arose, and read awhile,
With forehead 'gainst the window-pane.
Again she try'd, and then again,
Until the dusk eve left her dark
Upon the legend of St. Mark.
From plaited lawn-frill, fine and thin,
She lifted up her soft warm chin,
With aching neck and swimming eyes,
And daz'd with saintly imageries.

All was gloom, and silent all,
Save now and then the still foot-fall
Of one returning homewards late,
Past the echoing minster-gate.

The clamorous daws, that all the day
Above tree-tops and towers play,
Pair by pair had gone to rest,
Each in its ancient belfry-nest,
Where asleep they fall betimes,
To music of the drowsy chimes.

All was silent, all was gloom,
Abroad and in the homely room:
Down she sat, poor cheated soul!
And struck a lamp from the dismal coal;
Lean'd forward, with bright drooping hair
And slant book, full against the glare.

Her shadow, in uneasy guise,
Hover'd about, a giant size,
On ceiling-beam and old oak chair,
The parrot's cage, and panel square;
And the warm angled winter screen,
On which were many monsters seen,
Call'd doves of Siam, Lima mice,
And legless birds of Paradise,
Macaw, and tender Avadavat,
And silken-furr'd Angora cat.
Untir'd she read, her shadow still
Glower'd about, as it would fill
The room with wildest forms and shades,
As though some ghostly queen of spades
Had come to mock behind her back,
And dance, and ruffle her garments black.
Untir'd she read the legend page,
Of holy Mark, from youth to age,
On land, on sea, in pagan chains,
Rejoicing for his many pains.
Sometimes the learned eremite,
With golden star, or dagger bright,
Referr'd to pious poesies
Written in smallest crow-quill size
Beneath the text; and thus the rhyme
Was parcell'd out from time to time:
'Gif ye wol stonden hardie wight—
Amiddes of the blacke night—
Righte in the churche porch, pardie
Ye wol behold a companie
Appouchen thee full dolourouse
For sooth to sain from everich house
Be it in City or village
Wol come the Phantom and image
Of ilka gent and ilka carle
Whom coldè Deathè hath in parle
And wol some day that very year
Touchen with foulè venime spear
And sadly do them all to die—
Hem all shalt thou see verilie—
And everichon shall by the[e] pass
All who must die that year Alas

——‘Als writith he of swevenis,
Men han beforne they wake in bliss,
Whanne that hir friendes thinke hem bound
In crimped shroude farre under grounde;
And how a litling child mote be
A saint er its nativitie,
Gif that the modre (God her blesse!)
Kepen in solitarinesse,
And kissen devoute the holy croce,
Of Goddes love, and Sathan’s force,—
He writith; and thinges many mo:
Of swiche thinges I may not show.
Bot I must tellen verilie
Somdel of Saintè Cicilie,
And chieflie what he auctorethe
Of Saintè Markis life and dethe:’

At length her constant eyelids come
Upon the fervent martyrdom;
Then lastly to his holy shrine,
Exalt amid the tapers’ shine
At Venice,—

ODES, LYRICS AND SONGS

Ode to Apollo

IN thy western halls of gold
When thou sittest in thy state,
Bards, that erst sublimely told
Heroic deeds, and sang of fate,
With fervour seize their adamantyne lyres,
Whose chords are solid rays, and twinkle radiant fires.

Here Homer with his nervous arms
Strikes the twanging harp of war,
And even the western splendour warms,
While the trumpets sound afar:
But, what creates the most intense surprise,
His soul looks through renovated eyes.

Then, through thy Temple wide, melodious swells
The sweet majestic tone of Maro's lyre:
The soul delighted on each accent dwells,—
Enraptur'd dwells,—not daring to respire,
The while he tells of grief around a funeral pyre.

'Tis awful silence then again;
Expectant stand the spheres;
Breathless the laurell'd peers,
Nor move, till ends the lofty strain,
Nor move till Milton's tuneful thunders cease,
And leave once more the ravish'd heavens in peace.

Thou biddest Shakespeare wave his hand,
And quickly forward spring
The Passions—a terrific band—
And each vibrates the string
That with its tyrant temper best accords,
While from their Master's lips pour forth the inspiring words.

A silver trumpet Spenser blows,
And, as its martial notes to silence flee,
From a virgin chorus flows
A hymn in praise of spotless Chastity.

'Tis still! Wild warblings from the Æolian lyre
Enchantment softly breathe, and tremblingly expire.

Next thy Tasso's ardent numbers
Float along the pleased air,
Calling youth from idle slumbers,
Rousing them from Pleasure's lair:—
Then o'er the strings his fingers gently move,
And melt the soul to pity and to love.

But when *Thou* joinest with the Nine,
And all the powers of song combine,
We listen here on earth:
The dying tones that fill the air,
And charm the ear of evening fair,
From thee, great God of Bards, receive their heavenly birth.

February 1815

Hymn to Apollo

THOUGH Keats in other verses of no great consequence appears pleased with the game of wearing a crown of laurel, here he becomes violently ashamed of it. The occasion may have been that at Leigh Hunt's where T. L. Peacock disturbed the proceedings and for his part grimly refused to have a chaplet woven for his own forehead even by a pretty girl.

GOD of the golden bow,
And of the golden lyre,
And of the golden hair,
And of the golden fire,
Charioteer
Of the patient year,
Where—where slept thine ire,
When like a blank idiot I put on thy wreath,
Thy laurel, thy glory,
The light of thy story,
Or was I a worm—too low crawling for death?
O Delphic Apollo!

The Thunderer grasp'd and grasp'd,
 The Thunderer frown'd and frown'd;
 The eagle's feathery mane
 For wrath became stiffen'd—the sound
 Of breeding thunder
 Went drowsily under,
 Muttering to be unbound.
 O why didst thou pity, and beg for a worm?
 Why touch thy soft lute
 Till the thunder was mute,
 Why was not I crush'd—such a pitiful germ?
 O Delphic Apollo!

The Pleiades were up,
 Watching the silent air;
 The seeds and roots in the Earth
 Were swelling for summer fare;
 The Ocean, its neighbour,
 Was at its old labour,
 When, who—who did dare
 To tie, like a madman, thy plant round his brow.
 And grin and look proudly,
 And blaspheme so loudly,
 And live for that honour, to stoop to thee now?
 O Delphic Apollo!

Ode to May

CONCERNING Maia, a daughter of Atlas, Keats may have been puzzled to get much classical information. She is just mentioned by Ovid, Virgil, Hesiod, Homer. Keats turns to the topic of Greek poetry, and the irrelevance of popular applause.

MOTHER of Hermes! and still youthful Maia!
 May I sing to thee
 As thou wast hymned on the shores of Baia?
 Or may I woo thee
 In earlier Sicilian? or thy smiles
 Seek as they once were sought, in Grecian isles,
 By bards who died content on pleasant sward,
 Leaving great verse unto a little clan?

O, give me their old vigour, and unheard
 Save of the quiet primrose, and the span
 Of heaven and few ears,
 Rounded by thee, my song should die away
 Content as theirs,
 Rich in the simple worship of a day.

May 1, 1818

Ode on Indolence

I HAVE accepted the order of the stanzas (Keats did not publish the Ode himself) proposed by Mr. H. W. Garrod.

'They toil not, neither do they spin.'

ONE morn before me were three figures seen,
 With bowed necks, and joined hands, side-faced;
 And one behind the other stepp'd serene,
 In placid sandals, and in white robes graced;
 They pass'd, like figures on a marble urn,
 When shifted round to see the other side;
 They came again; as when the urn once more
 Is shifted round, the first seen shades return;
 And they were strange to me, as may betide
 With vases, to one deep in Phidian lore.

How is it, Shadows! that I knew ye not?
 How came ye muffled in so hush a mask?
 Was it a silent deep-disguised plot
 To steal away, and leave without a task
 My idle days? Ripe was the drowsy hour;
 The blissful cloud of summer-indolence
 Benumb'd my eyes; my pulse grew less and less;
 Pain had no sting, and pleasure's wreath no flower:
 O, why did ye not melt, and leave my sense
 Unhaunted quite of all but—nothingness?

And once more came they by; alas! wherefore?
 My sleep had been embroider'd with dim dreams;

My soul had been a lawn besprinkled o'er
With flowers, and stirring shades, and baffled beams:
The morn was clouded, but no shower fell,
Tho' in her lids hung the sweet tears of May;
The open casement press'd a new-leav'd vine,
Let in the budding warmth and throstle's lay;
O Shadows! 'twas a time to bid farewell!
Upon your skirts had fallen no tears of mine.

A third time pass'd they by, and, passing, turn'd
Each one the face a moment whiles to me;
Then faded, and to follow them I burn'd
And ach'd for wings because I knew the three;
The first was a fair Maid, and Love her name;
The second was Ambition, pale of cheek,
And ever watchful with fatigued eye;
The last, whom I love more, the more of blame
Is heap'd upon her, maiden most unmeek,—
I knew to be my demon Poesy.

They faded, and forsooth! I wanted wings:
O folly! What is Love! and where is it?
And for that poor Ambition! it springs
From a man's little heart's short fever-fit;
For Poesy! no, she has not a joy,—
At least for me,—so sweet as drowsy noons,
And evenings steep'd in honied indolence;
O, for an age so shelter'd from annoy,
That I may never know how change the moons,
Or hear the voice of busy common-sense!

So, ye three Ghosts, adieu! Ye cannot raise
My head cool-bedded in the flowery grass;
For I would not be dieted with praise,
A pet-lamb in a sentimental farce!
Fade softly from my eyes, and be once more
In masque-like figures on the dreamy urn;
Farewell! I yet have visions for the night,
And for the day faint visions there is store;
Vanish, ye Phantoms! from my idle spright,
Into the clouds, and never more return!

Ode to Fanny

PHYSICIAN Nature! let my spirit blood!

O ease my heart of verse and let me rest;
 Throw me upon thy Tripod, till the flood
 Of stifling numbers ebbs from my full breast.
 A theme! a theme! great Nature! give a theme;

Let me begin my dream.
 I come—I see thee, as thou standest there,
 Beckon me out into the wintry air.

Ah! dearest love, sweet home of all my fears,
 And hopes, and joys, and panting miseries,—
 To-night, if I may guess, thy beauty wears
 A smile of such delight,
 As brilliant and as bright,
 As when with ravished, aching, vassal eyes,
 Lost in soft amaze,
 I gaze, I gaze!

Who now, with greedy looks, eats up my feast?
 What stare outfaces now my silver moon!
 Ah! keep that hand unravished at the least;
 Let, let, the amorous burn—
 But, pr'ythee, do not turn
 The current of your heart from me so soon.
 O! save, in charity,
 The quickest pulse for me.

Save it for me, sweet love! though music breathe
 Voluptuous visions into the warm air;
 Though swimming through the dance's dangerous wreath,
 Be like an April day,
 Smiling and cold and gay,
 A temperate lily, temperate as fair;
 Then, Heaven! there will be
 A warmer June for me.

Why, this—you'll say, my Fanny! is not true:
 Put your soft hand upon your snowy side,
 Where the heart beats: confess—'tis nothing new—

Must not a woman be
A feather on the sea,
Sway'd to and fro by every wind and tide?
Of as uncertain speed
As blow-ball from the mead?

I know it—and to know it is despair
To one who loves you as I love, sweet Fanny!
Whose heart goes fluttering for you every where,
Nor, when away you roam,
Dare keep its wretched home,
Love, love alone, has pains severe and many:
Then, loveliest! keep me free,
From torturing jealousy.

Ah! if you prize my subdued soul above
The poor, the fading, brief, pride of an hour;
Let none profane my Holy See of love,
Or with a rude hand break
The sacramental cake:
Let none else touch the just new-budded flower;
If not—may my eyes close,
Love! on their last repose.

In Drear-nighted December

THE text is difficult; Keats scarcely elucidated his own meaning although he achieved a haunting melody. He did not publish the poem, which he copied in Miss Reynolds's album, perhaps through some association with evenings round the piano in the Reynolds home.

IN drear-nighted December,
Too happy, happy tree,
Thy branches ne'er remember
Their green felicity:
The north cannot undo them,
With a sleety whistle through them;
Nor frozen thawings glue them
From budding at the prime.

In drear-nighted December,
 Too happy, happy brook,
 Thy bubblings ne'er remember
 Apollo's summer look;
 But with a sweet forgetting,
 They stay their crystal fretting,
 Never, never petting
 About the frozen time.

Ah! would 'twere so with many
 A gentle girl and boy!
 But were there ever any
 Writh'd not at passed joy?
 To know the change and feel it,
 When there is none to heal it,
 Nor numbed sense to steel it,
 Was never said in rhyme.

December 1819

Lines on Seeing a Lock of Milton's Hair

CHIEF of organic numbers!
 Old Scholar of the Spheres!
 Thy spirit never slumbers,
 But rolls about our ears,
 For ever, and for ever!
 O what a mad endeavour
 Worketh he,
 Who to thy sacred and ennobled hearse
 Would offer a burnt sacrifice of verse
 And melody.

How heavenward thou soundest,
 Live Temple of sweet noise,
 And Discord unconfoundest,
 Giving Delight new joys,
 And Pleasure nobler pinions!
 O, where are thy dominions?
 Lend thine ear
 To a young Delian oath,—aye, by thy soul,
 By all that from thy mortal lips did roll,

And by the kernel of thine earthly love,
Beauty, in things on earth, and things above
I swear!

When every childish fashion
Has vanish'd from my rhyme,
Will I, grey-gone in passion,
Leave to an after-time
Hymning and harmony
Of thee, and of thy works, and of thy life;
But vain is now the burning and the strife,
Pangs are in vain, until I grow high-rife
With old Philosophy,
And mad with glimpses of futurity!

For many years my offering must be hush'd;
When I do speak, I'll think upon this hour,
Because I feel my forehead hot and flush'd,
Even at the simplest vassal of thy power,—
A lock of thy bright hair,—
Sudden it came,
And I was startled, when I caught thy name
Coupled so unaware;
Yet, at the moment, temperate was my blood.
I thought I had beheld it from the flood.

January 21, 1818

I had a Dove

I HAD a dove and the sweet dove died;
And I have thought it died of grieving:
O, what could it grieve for? Its feet were tied,
With a silken thread of my own hand's weaving:
Sweet little red feet! why should you die—
Why should you leave me, sweet bird! why?
You liv'd alone in the forest-tree,
Why, pretty thing! would you not live with me?
I kiss'd you oft and gave you white pease;
Why not live sweetly, as in the green trees?

Shed no Tear

THIS is usually entitled 'Faery Song'; yet 'this silvery bill' makes me fancy that it is a bird's song interpreted, and the close recalls a song in Coleridge's 'Zapolya' from a magical bird, though Coleridge's bird had a 'beak of gold.' 'Ah! woe is me,' to which the title 'Faery Song' was given in 1848, may be similarly intended.

SHED no tear—O shed no tear!
 The flower will bloom another year.
 Weep no more—O weep no more!
 Young buds sleep in the root's white core.
 Dry your eyes—O dry your eyes,
 For I was taught in Paradise
 To ease my breast of melodies—
 Shed no tear.

Overhead—look overhead
 'Mong the blossoms white and red.
 Look up, look up—I flutter now
 On this flush pomegranate bough.
 See me—'tis this silvery bill
 Ever cures the good man's ill.
 Shed no tear—O shed no tear!
 The flower will bloom another year.
 Adieu—Adieu—I fly, adieu,
 I vanish in the heaven's blue—
 Adieu, Adieu!

Ah! woe is me

AH! woe is me, poor silver-wing!
 That I must chant thy lady's dirge,
 And death to this fair haunt of spring,
 Of melody, and streams of flowery verge.
 Poor silver-wing! ah, woe is me!
 That I must see
 These blossoms snow upon thy lady's pall!
 Go, pretty page! and in her ear
 Whisper that the hour is near!

Softly tell her not to fear
Such calm favonian burial!
Go, pretty page! and soothly tell,—
The blossoms hang by a melting spell,
And fall they must, ere a star wink thrice
Upon her closed eyes,
That now in vain are weeping their last tears,
At sweet life leaving, and these arbours green,—
Rich dowry from the Spirit of the Spheres,—
Alas! poor Queen!

Extracts from an Opera

O! WERE I one of the Olympian twelve,
Their godships should pass this into a law,—
That when a man doth set himself in toil
After some beauty veiled far away,
Each step he took should make his lady's hand
More soft, more white, and her fair cheek more fair;
And for each briar-berry he might eat,
A kiss should bud upon the tree of love,
And pulp and ripen richer every hour,
To melt away upon the traveller's lips.

DAISY'S SONG

THE sun, with his great eye,
Sees not so much as I;
And the moon, all silver-proud,
Might as well be in a cloud.

And O the spring—the spring!
I lead the life of a king!
Couch'd in the teeming grass,
I spy each pretty lass.

I look where no one dares,
And I stare where no one stares,
And when the night is nigh,
Lambs bleat my lullaby.

FOLLY'S SONG

WHEN wedding fiddles are a-playing,
 Huzza for folly O!
 And when maidens go a-maying,
 Huzza for folly O!
 When a milk-pail is upset,
 Huzza for folly O!
 And the clothes left in the wet,
 Huzza for folly O!
 When the barrel's set abroach,
 Huzza for folly O!
 When Kate Eyebrow keeps a coach,
 Huzza for folly O!
 When the pig is over-roasted,
 Huzza for folly O!
 And the cheese is over-toasted,
 Huzza for folly O!
 When Sir Snap is with his lawyer,
 Huzza for folly O!
 And Miss Chip has kiss'd the sawyer,
 Huzza for folly O!

* * * * * *

OH, I am frighten'd with most hateful thoughts!
 Perhaps her voice is not a nightingale's,
 Perhaps her teeth are not the fairest pearl;
 Her eye-lashes may be, for aught I know,
 Not longer than the May-fly's small fan-horns;
 There may not be one dimple on her hand;
 And freckles many; ah! a careless nurse,
 In haste to teach the little thing to walk,
 May have crumpt up a pair of Dian's legs,
 And warpt the ivory of a Juno's neck.

SONG

THE stranger lighted from his steed,
 And ere he spake a word,
 He seiz'd my lady's lily hand,
 And kiss'd it all unheard.

The stranger walk'd into the hall,
 And ere he spake a word,
 He kiss'd my lady's cherry lips,
 And kiss'd 'em all unheard.

The stranger walk'd into the bower—,
 But my lady first did go,—
 Aye hand in hand into the bower,
 Where my lord's roses blow.

My lady's maid had a silken scarf,
 And a golden ring had she,
 And a kiss from the stranger, as off he went
 Again on his fair palfrey.

* * * * *

ASLEEP! O sleep a little while, white pearl!
 And let me kneel, and let me pray to thee,
 And let me call Heaven's blessing on thine eyes,
 And let me breathe into the happy air,
 That doth enfold and touch thee all about,
 Vows of my slavery, my giving up,
 My sudden adoration, my great love!

1818

Chorus of Fairies

FIRE, AIR, EARTH, AND WATER

SALAMANDER

HAPPY, happy glowing fire!

ZEPHYR

Fragrant air! delicious light!

DUSKETHA

Let me to my glooms retire!

BREAMA

I to green-weed rivers bright!

SALAMANDER

Happy, happy glowing fire!
Dazzling bowers of soft retire,
Ever let my nourish'd wing,
Like a bat's, still wandering,
Nimbly fan your fiery spaces,
Spirit sole in deadly places.
In unhaunted roar and blaze,
Open eyes that never daze,
Let me see the myriad shapes
Of men, and beasts, and fish, and apes,
Portray'd in many a fiery den.
And wrought by spumy bitumen.
On the deep intenser roof,
Arched every way aloof,
Let me breathe upon their skies,
And anger their live tapestries;
Free from cold, and every care
Of chilly rain, and shivering air.

ZEPHYR

Spirit of Fire! away! away!
Or your very roundelay
Will sear my plumage newly budded
From its quilled sheath, all studded
With the self-same dew that fell
On the May-grown asphodel.
Spirit of Fire—away! away!

BREAMA

Spirit of Fire—away! away!
Zephyr, blue-eyed fairy, turn,
And see my cool sedge-bury'd urn,
Where it rests its mossy brim
'Mid water-mint and cresses dim;
And the flowers, in sweet troubles,
Lift their eyes above the bubbles,
Like our Queen, when she would please
To sleep, and Oberon will tease.
Love me, blue-eyed fairy, true!
Soothly I am sick for you.

ZEPHYR

Gentle Breama! by the first
Violet young nature nurst,
I will bathe myself with thee,
So you sometimes follow me
To my home, far, far, in west,
Beyond the nimble-wheeled quest
Of the golden-browed sun:
Come with me, o'er tops of trees,
To my fragrant palaces,
Where they ever floating are
Beneath the cherish of a star
Call'd Vesper, who with silver veil
Ever hides his brilliance pale,
Ever gently-drows'd doth keep
Twilight for the fays to sleep.
Fear not that your watery hair
Will thirst in drouthy ringlets there;
Clouds of stored summer rains
Thou shalt taste, before the stains
Of the mountain soil they take,
And too unlucent for thee make.
I love thee, crystal fairy, true!
Sooth I am as sick for you!

SALAMANDER

Out, ye aguish fairies, out!
Chilly lovers, what a rout
Keep ye with your frozen breath,
Colder than the mortal death.
Adder-eyed Dusketha, speak,
Shall we leave these, and go seek
In the earth's wide entrails old
Couches warm as theirs are cold?
O for a fiery gloom and thee,
Dusketha, so enchantingly
Freckle-wing'd and lizard-sided!

DUSKETHA

By thee, Sprite, will I be guided!
I care not for cold or heat;
Frost and flame, or sparks, or sleet,

To my essence are the same;
 But I honour more the flame.
 Sprite of Fire, I follow thee
 Wheresoever it may be,
 To the torrid spouts and fountains,
 Underneath earth-quaked mountains;
 Or, at thy supreme desire,
 Touch the very pulse of fire
 With my bare unlidded eyes.

SALAMANDER

Sweet Dusketha! paradise!
 Off, ye icy Spirits, fly!
 Frosty creatures of the sky!

DUSKETHA

Breathe upon them, fiery sprite!

ZEPHYR AND BREAMA

Away! away to our delight!

SALAMANDER

Go, feed on icicles, while we
 Bedded in tongued flames will be.

DUSKETHA

Lead me to those feverous glooms,
 Sprite of Fire!

BREAMA

Me to the blooms,
 Blue-eyed Zephyr, of those flowers
 Far in the west where the May-cloud lours;
 And the beams of still Vesper, when winds are all whist,
 Are shed thro' the rain and the milder mist,
 And twilight your floating bowers.

Hence, Burgundy, Claret and Port

WRITTEN in a collection of comedies and tragedies, namely Beaumont and Fletcher's Works. The mood is continued and varied in 'Welcome joy and welcome sorrow.'

HENCE, Burgundy, Claret, and Port,
 Away with old Hock and Madeira;
 Too earthly ye are for my sport;
 There's a beverage brighter and clearer.
 Instead of a pitiful rummer,
 My wine overbrims a whole summer;
 My bowl is the sky,
 And I drink at my eye,
 Till I feel in the brain
 A Delphian pain—
 Then follow, my Caius! then follow:
 On the green of the hill
 We will drink our fill
 Of golden sunshine,
 Till our brains intertwine
 With the glory and grace of Apollo!

February 7, 1818

Song

[Written on a blank page in Beaumont and Fletcher's Works, between 'Cupid's Revenge' and 'The Two Noble Kinsmen.']

SPIRIT here that reignest!
 Spirit here that painest!
 Spirit here that burnest!
 Spirit here that mournest!
 Spirit, I bow
 My forehead 'ow,
 Enshaded with thy pinions.
 Spirit, I look
 All passion-struck
 Into thy pale dominions.

Spirit here that laughest!
 Spirit here that quaffest
 Spirit here that dancest!
 Noble soul that prancest!
 Spirit, with thee
 I join in the glee
 A-nudging the elbow of Momus.
 Spirit, I flush
 With a Bacchanal blush
 Just fresh from the banquet of Comus.

Welcome Joy

 'Under the flag
 Of each his faction, they to battle bring
 Their embryon atoms.'—MILTON.

WELCOME joy, and welcome sorrow,
 Lethe's weed and Hermes' feather;
 Come to-day, and come to-morrow.
 I do love you both together!
 I love to mark sad faces in fair weather;
 And hear a merry laugh amid the thunder;
 Fair and foul I love together
 Meadows sweet where flames are under,
 And a giggle at a wonder;
 Visage sage at pantomime;
 Funeral, and steeple-chime;
 Infant playing with a skull;
 Morning fair, and shipwreck'd hull;
 Nightshade with the woodbine kissing;
 Serpents in red roses hissing;
 Cleopatra regal-dress'd
 With the aspic at her breast;
 Dancing music, music sad.
 Both together, sane and mad;
 Muses bright and muses pale;
 Sombre Saturn, Momus hale;—
 Laugh and sigh, and laugh again;
 Oh the sweetness of the pain!
 Muses bright, and muses pale,

Bare your faces of the veil;
Let me see; and let me write
Of the day, and of the night—
Both together: let me slake
All my thirst for sweet heart-ache!
Let my bower be of yew,
Interwreath'd with myrtles new;
Pines and lime-trees full in bloom,
And my couch a low grass tomb.

1818

The Poet

WHERE'S the Poet? show him! show him,
Muses nine! that I may know him!
'Tis the man who with a man
Is an equal, be he king,
Or poorest of the beggar-clan,
Or any other wondrous thing
A man may be 'twixt ape and Plato;
'Tis the man who with a bird,
Wren or eagle, finds his way to
All its instincts; he hath heard
The lion's roaring, and can tell
What his horny throat expresseth,
And to him the tiger's yell
Comes articulate and presseth
On his ear like mother-tongue

1818

Meg Merrilies

OLD MEG she was a Gipsy,
And liv'd upon the Moors:
Her bed it was the brown heath turf,
And her house was out of doors.

Her apples were swart blackberries,
Her currants pods o' broom;
Her wine was dew of the wild white rose,
Her book a churchyard tomb.

Her Brothers were the craggy hulls,
Her Sisters larchen trees;
Alone with her great family
She liv'd as she did please.

No breakfast had she many a morn.
No dinner many a noon,
And 'stead of supper she would stare
Full hard against the Moon.

But every morn ot woodbine fresh
She made her garlanding,
And every night the dark glen yew
She wove, and she would sing.

And with her fingers old and brown
She plaited mats o' rushes,
And gave them to the cottagers
She met among the bushes.

Old Meg was brave as Margaret Queen
And tall as Amazon:
An old red blanket cloak she wore;
A chip hat had she on.
God rest her aged bones somewhere —
She died full long ago!

July 1818

La Belle Dame Sans Merci

THIS poem was published in Hunt's *Indicator*, 10 May 1820, with the reading 'Mercy' for 'Merci' in the title and the signature 'Caviare.' Hunt's introduction said, 'Among the pieces printed at the end of Chaucer's works, and attributed to him, is a translation, under this title, of a poem of the celebrated Alain Chartier, Secretary to Charles the Sixth and Seventh. It was the title which suggested to a friend the

verses at the end of our present number.' Republishing the best of his work in 1834 Hunt commented on the word 'friend' thus: 'The late Mr. Keats. This beautiful little effusion is reprinted in the *Indicator* . . . because it is not to be found in the collected works of that delightful poet'; and his note on 'Caviare' was, "'Caviare to the multitude!—*Hamlet*. The signature was of Mr. Keats's own putting; a touching circumstance, when we call to mind the treatment he met with, and consider how his memory has triumphed over it.'

In the *Indicator*, the poem was printed from a variant copy; that is, varying from the usually preferred text. The 'Knight-at-arms' is a 'wretched wight,' to begin with. 'Death's lily' and 'death's fading rose' are simply (and with deeper art) 'a lily,' 'a fading rose,'—and so on.

If we keep to Hunt's word, that Keats wrote on the title he found in his Chauceriana, it may be best. Interpreters have seen many shadowed meanings in the poem, but it may not be autobiographical any more than Coleridge's 'Christabel'; a phrase has probably sent Keats's poetical self into the region of ballad romance, ghostliness and horror. One may say even that he was enjoying his piece of writing rather than smitten with a woeful agony from his own circumstances at the moment.

O. WHAT can ail thee, Knight-at-arms
Alone and palely loitering;
The sedge has wither'd from the lake,
And no birds sing.

O, what can ail thee, Knight-at-arms
So haggard and so woe-begone?
The squirrel's granary is full,
And the harvest's done.

I see a lily on thy brow,
With anguish moist and fever dew;
And on thy cheeks a fading rose
Fast withereth too.

I met a lady in the meads
Full beautiful, a fairy's child;
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild.

I made a garland for her head,
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;
She look'd at me as she did love,
And made sweet moan.

I set her on my pacing steed,
And nothing else saw all day long;
For sidelong would she bend, and sing
A faery's song.

She found me roots of relish sweet,
And honey wild, and manna dew;
And sure in language strange she said,
'I love thee true.'

She took me to her elfin grot,
And there she wept and sighed full sore
And there I shut her wild wild eyes
With kisses four.

And there she lulled me asleep
And there I dream'd, ah woe betide,
The latest dream I ever dream'd
On the cold hill side.

I saw pale kings, and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
They cry'd—'La belle Dame sans merci
Hath thee in thrall!'

I saw their starv'd lips in the gloam
With horrid warning gaped wide,
And I awoke and found me here
On the cold hill's side.

And this is why I sojourn here
Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge has wither'd from the lake,
And no birds sing.

April 1819

What can I Do?

WHAT can I do to drive away
Remembrance from my eyes? for they have seen,
Aye, an hour ago, my brilliant Queen!
Touch has a memory. O say, love, say,
What can I do to kill it and be free
In my old liberty?
When every fair one that I saw was fair,
Enough to catch me in but half a snare.
Not keep me there:
When howe'er poor or particolour'd things,
My muse had wings,
And ever ready was to take her course
Whither I bent her force,
Unintellectual, yet divine to me;
Divine, I say!—What sea-bird o'er the sea
Is a philosopher the while he goes
Winging along where the great water throes?

How shall I do
To get anew
Those moulted feathers, and so mount once more
Above, above
The reach of fluttering Love,
And make him cower lowly while I soar?
Shall I gulp wine? No, that is vulgarism,
A heresy and schism,
Foisted into the canon law of love;
No,—wine is only sweet to happy men;
More dismal cares
Seize on me unawares,—
Where shall I learn to get my peace again?
To banish thoughts of that most hateful land,
Dungeoner of my friends, that wicked strand
Where they were wreck'd and live a wrecked life;
That monstrous region, whose dull rivers pour,
Ever from their sordid urns unto the shore,
Unown'd of any weedy-haired gods;
Whose winds, all zephyrless, hold scourging rods,
Iced in the great lakes, to afflict mankind;

Whose rank-grown forests, frosted, black, and blind,
Would fright a Dryad; whose harsh herbag'd meads
Make lean and lank the starv'd ox while he feeds;
There bad flowers have no scent, birds no sweet song,
And great unerring Nature once seems wrong.

O for some sunny spell
To dissipate the shadows of this hell!
Say they are gone,— with the new dawning light
Steps forth my lady bright!
O let me once more rest
My soul upon that dazzling breast!
Let once again these aching arms be plac'd,
The tender gaolers of thy waist!
And let me feel that warm breath here and there
To spread a rapture in my very hair,—
O, the sweetness of the pain!
Give me those lips again!
Enough! Enough! it is enough for me
To dream of thee!

October 1819

This living Hand

THIS living hand, now warm and capable
Of earnest grasping, would, if it were cold
And in the icy silence of the tomb,
So haunt thy days and chill thy dreaming nights
That thou would'st wish thine own heart dry of blood
So in my veins red life might stream again,
And thou be conscience-calm'd—see here it is—
I hold it towards you.

REFLECTIVE, OCCASIONAL AND
HUMOROUS

The Thrush said

O THOU whose face hath felt the winter's wind,
Whose eye has seen the snow-clouds hung in mist,
And the black elm tops 'mong the freezing stars,
To thee the spring will be a harvest-time.
O thou, whose only book has been the light
Of supreme darkness which thou feddest on
Night after night when Phœbus was away,
To thee the spring shall be a triple morn.
O fret not after knowledge—I have none,
And yet my song comes native with the warmth.
O fret not after knowledge—I have none,
And yet the evening listens. He who saddens
At thought of idleness cannot be idle,
And he's awake who thinks himself asleep.

February 19, 1818

Epistle to John Hamilton Reynolds

APPARENTLY the word 'lampit' (for limpet) was picked up from Robert Burns's poems. 'Junius Brutus' may allude to the actor Junius Brutus Booth (1796-1852) on whom Hazlitt writes in his *View of the English Stage*. Miss Edgeworth is presumably Maria Edgeworth the novelist. Claude's Enchanted Castle was probably known to Keats and Reynolds through engravings, but Sir Sidney Colvin's discussion of the pictures in this 'Epistle' and elsewhere in Keats's poetry should be read (*John Keats*, 1919. p. 263 &c.)

DEAR Reynolds, as last night I lay in bed,
There came before my eyes that wonted thread
Of shapes, and shadows, and remembrances,
That every other minute vex and please:
Things all disjointed come from north and south, —
Two witch's eyes above a cherub's mouth,
Voltaire with casque and shield and habergeon,
And Alexander with his nightcap on;
Old Socrates a-tying his cravat,
And Hazlitt playing with Miss Edgeworth's cat;
And Junius Brutus, pretty well so so,
Making the best of 's way towards Soho.

Few are there who escape these visitings, —
Perhaps one or two whose lives have patent wings,
And thro' whose curtains peeps no hellish nose,
No wild-boar tushes, and no mermaid's toes;
But flowers bursting out with lusty pride,
And young Æolian harps personified;
Some Titian colours touch'd into real life, —
The sacrifice goes on: the pontiff knife
Gleams in the sun, the milk-white heifer lows,
The pipes go shrilly, the libation flows:
A white sail shows above the green-head cliff,
Moves round the point, and throws her anchor stiff;
The mariners join hymn with those on land.

You know the Enchanted Castle, — it doth stand
Upon a rock, on the border of a lake,
Nested in trees, which all do seem to shake
From some old magic-like Urganda's sword.
O Phœbus! that I had thy sacred word
To show this Castle, in fair dreaming wise,
Unto my friend, while sick and ill he lies!

You know it well enough, where it doth seem
A mossy place, a Merlin's Hall, a dream;
You know the clear lake, and the little isles,
The mountains blue, and cold near neighbour rills,
All which elsewhere are but half animate;
There do they look alive to love and hate,
To smiles and frowns; they seem a lifted mound
Above some giant, pulsing underground.

Part of the building was a chosen see,
Built by a banish'd Santon of Chaldee;
The other part, two thousand years from him,
Was built by Cuthbert de Saint Aldebrim;
Then there's a little wing, far from the sun,
Built by a Lapland witch turn'd maudlin nun;
And many other juts of aged stone
Founded with many a mason-devil's groan.

The doors all look as if they op'd themselves,
The windows as if latch'd by fays and elves,
And from them comes a silver flash of light,
As from the westward of a summer's night;
Or like a beauteous woman's large blue eyes
Gone mad thro' olden songs and poesies.

See! what is coming from the distance dim!
A golden galley all in silken trim!
Three rows of oars are lightening, moment whiles,
Into the verd'rous bosoms of those isles;
Towards the shade, under the Castle wall,
It comes in silence,—now 'tis hidden all.
The clarion sounds, and from a postern-gate
An echo of sweet music doth create
A fear in the poor herdsman, who doth bring
His beasts to trouble the enchanted spring,—
He tells of the sweet music, and the spot,
To all his friends, and they believe him not.

O that our dreamings all, of sleep or wake,
Would all their colours from the sunset take:
From something of material sublime,
Rather than shadow our own soul's day-time
In the dark void of night. For in the world
We jostle,—but my flag is not unfurl'd
On the admiral-staff,—and so philosophize
I dare not yet! Oh, never, will the prize,
High reason, and the lore of good and ill,
Be my award! Things cannot to the will
Be settled, but they tease us out of thought;
Or is it that imagination brought
Beyond its proper bound, yet still confin'd,

Lost in a sort of Purgatory blind,
Cannot refer to any standard law
Of either earth or heaven? It is a flaw
In happiness, to see beyond our bourn,—
It forces us in summer skies to mourn,
It spoils the singing of the nightingale.

Dear Reynolds! I have a mysterious tale,
And cannot speak it: the first page I read
Upon a lampit rock of green sea-weed
Among the breakers; 'twas a quiet eve,
The rocks were silent, the wide sea did weave
An untumultuous fringe of silver foam
Along the flat brown sand; I was at home
And should have been most happy,—but I saw
Too far into the sea, where every maw
The greater on the less feeds evermore.
But I saw too distinct into the core
Of an eternal fierce destruction,
And so from happiness I far was gone.
Still am I sick of it, and tho', to-day,
I've gather'd young spring-leaves, and flowers gay
Of periwinkle and wild strawberry,
Still do I that most fierce destruction see,—
The shark at savage prey, the hawk at pounce,
The gentle robin, like a Pard or Ounce,
Ravening a worm—Away ye horrid moods,
Moods of one's mind! You know I hate them well,
You know I'd sooner be a clapping bell
To some Kamschatkan missionary church,
Than with these horrid moods be left in lurch.
Do you get health—and Tom the same—I'll dance,
And from detested moods in new Romance
Take refuge—Of bad lines a Centaine dose
Is sure enough—and so "here follows prose".

TEIGNMOUTH, *March 25, 1818*

*Lines Written in the Highlands
after a Visit to Burns's Country*

THERE is a charm in footing slow across a silent plain,
Where patriot battle has been fought, when glory had the gain;
There is a pleasure on the heath where Druids old have been,
Where mantles grey have rustled by and swept the nettles green;
There is a joy in every spot made known by times of old,
New to the feet, although each tale a hundred times be told;
There is a deeper joy than all, more solemn in the heart,
More parching to the tongue than all, of more divine a smart,
When weary steps forget themselves upon a pleasant turf,
Upon hot sand, or flinty road, or sea-shore iron scurf,
Toward the castle or the cot, where long ago was born
One who was great through mortal days, and died of fame unshorn.
Light heather-bells may tremble then, but they are far away;
Wood-lark may sing from sandy fern, the sun may hear his lay;
Runnels may kiss the grass on shelves and shallows clear,
But their low voices are not heard, though come on travels drear;
Blood-red the sun may set behind black mountain peaks;
Blue tides may sluice and drench their time in caves and weedy creeks;
Eagles may seem to sleep wing-wide upon the air;
Ring-doves may fly convuls'd across to some high-cedar'd lair;
But the forgotten eye is still fast lidded to the ground,
As Palmer's, that with weariness, mid-desert shrine hath found.
At such a time the soul's a child, in childhood is the brain;
Forgotten is the worldly heart—alone, it beats in vain.
Ay, if a madman could have leave to pass a healthful day
To tell his forehead's swoon and faint when first began decay,
He might make tremble many a one whose spirit had gone forth
To find a Bard's low cradle-place about the silent North!
Scanty the hour and few the steps beyond the bourn of care,
Beyond the sweet and bitter world,—beyond it unaware!
Scanty the hour and few the steps, because a longer stay
Would bar return, and make a man forget his mortal way:
O horrible! to lose the sight of well remember'd face,

Of brother's eyes, of sister's brow—constant to every place;
Filling the air, as on we move, with portraiture intense;
More warm than those heroic tints that pain a painter's sense,
When shapes of old come striding by, and visages of old,
Locks shining black, hair scanty grey, and passions manifold.
No, no, that horror cannot be, for at the cable's length
Man feels the gentle anchor pull and gladdens in its strength:
One hour, half-idiot, he stands by mossy waterfall,
But in the very next he reads his soul's memorial:
He reads it on the mountain's height, where chance he may sit down
Upon rough marble diadem—that hill's eternal crown.
Yet be his anchor e'er so fast, room is there for a prayer
That man may never lose his mind on mountains black and bare;
That he may stray league after league some great birth-place to find
And keep his vision clear from speck, his inward sight unblind.

July 1818

Staffa

NOT Aladdin magian
Ever such a work began;
Not the wizard of the Dee
Ever such a dream could see;
Not St. John, in Patmos' Isle,
In the passion of his toil,
When he saw the churches seven,
Golden aisl'd, built up in heaven,
Gaz'd at such a rugged wonder.
As I stood its roofing under,
Lo! I saw one sleeping there,
On the marble cold and bare.
While the surges wash'd his feet,
And his garments white did beat
Drench'd about the sombre rocks,
On his neck his well-grown locks,
Lifted dry above the main,

Were upon the curl again.
'What is this? and what art thou?'
Whisper'd I, and touch'd his brow;
'What art thou? and what is this?'
Whisper'd I, and strove to kiss
The spirit's hand, to wake his eyes;
Up he started in a trice:
'I am Lycidas,' said he,
'Fam'd in funeral minstrelsy!
This was architectur'd thus
By the great Oceanus!—
Here his mighty waters play
Hollow organs all the day;
Here by turns his dolphins all,
Finny palmers great and small,
Come to pay devotion due—
Each a mouth of pearls must strew.
Many a mortal of these days,
Dares to pass our sacred ways,
Dares to touch audaciously
This Cathedral of the Sea!
I have been the pontiff-priest
Where the waters never rest,
Where a fledgy sea-bird choir
Soars for ever; holy fire
I have hid from mortal man;
Proteus is my Sacristan.
But the dulled eye of mortal
Hath pass'd beyond the rocky portal;
So for ever will I leave
Such a taint, and soon unweave
All the magic of the place.'
"Tis now free to stupid face,
To cutters and to fashion boats,
To cravats and to petticoats:—
The great sea shall war it down,
For its fame shall not be blown
At each farthing Quadrille dance.'
So saying, with a Spirit's glance
He dived!

July 1818

FROM

Otho the Great

I (ACT IV, SCENE II)

Ludolph. [solus] Auranthe! My Life!
Long have I lov'd thee, yet till now not lov'd:
Remembering, as I do, hard-hearted times
When I had heard even of thy death perhaps,
And thoughtless, suffered thee to pass alone
Into Elysium! now I follow thee
A substance of a shadow, wheresoe'er
Thou ledest me,—whether thy white feet press,
With pleasant weight, the amorous-aching earth,
Or thro' the air thou pioneerest me,
A shade! Yet sadly I predestinate!
O unbenignest Love, why wilt thou let
Darkness steal out upon the sleepy world
So wearily; as if night's chariot wheels
Were clogg'd in some thick cloud. O, changeful Love,
Let not her steeds with drowsy-footed pace
Pass the high stars, before sweet embassy
Comes from the pillow'd beauty of that fair
Completion of all delicate nature's wit.
Pout her faint lips anew with rubious health
And with thine infant fingers lift the fringe
Of her sick eyelids; that those eyes may glow
With wooing light upon me, ere the Morn
Peers with disrelish, grey, barren, and cold.

II (ACT V, SCENE V)

A Banqueting Hall, brilliantly illuminated, and set forth with all costly magnificence, with Supper-tables, laden with services of Gold and Silver. A door in the back scene, guarded by two Soldiers. Lords, Ladies, Knights, Gentlemen, &c., whispering sadly, and ranging themselves; part entering and part discovered.

First Knight. Grievously are we tantaliz'd, one and all—
Sway'd here and there, commanded to and fro
As though we were the shadows of a dream
And link'd to a sleeping fancy. What do we here?

Gonfred. I am no Seer; you know we must obey
The prince from A to Z, though it should be
To set the place in flames. I pray hast heard
Where the most wicked Princess is?

First Knight. There, Sir,
In the next room—have you remark'd those two
Stout soldiers posted at the door?

Gonfred. For what? [*They whisper.*]

First Lady. How ghast a train!

Second Lady. Sure this should be some splendid burial.

First Lady. What fearful whispering! See, see,—Gersa there!

Enter GERSA.

Gersa. Put on your brightest looks; smile if you can;
Behave as all were happy; keep your eyes
From the least watch upon him; if he speaks
To any one, answer collectedly,
Without surprise, his questions, howe'er strange.
Do this to the utmost,—though, alas! with me
The remedy grows hopeless! Here he comes,—
Observe what I have said, show no surprise.

Enter LUDOLPH, followed by SIGIFRED and Page.

Ludolph. A splendid company! rare beauties here!
I should have Orphean lips, and Plato's fancy,
Amphion's utterance, toned with his lyre,
Or the deep key of Jove's sonorous mouth,
To give fit salutation. Methought I heard,
As I came in, some whispers,—what of that?
'Tis natural men should whisper; at the kiss
Of Psyche given by Love, there was a buzz
Among the gods! and silence is as natural.
These draperies are fine, and, being a mortal,
I should desire no better; yet, in truth,
There must be some superior costliness,
Some wider-domed high magnificence!
I would have, as a mortal I may not,
Hanging of heaven's clouds, purple and gold,
Slung from the spheres; gauzes of silver mist,

Loop'd up with cords of twisted wreathed light,
 And tassell'd round with weeping meteors!
 These pendent lamps and chandeliers are bright
 As earthly fires from dull dross can be cleansed;
 Yet could my eyes drink up intenser beams
 Undazzled,—this is darkness,—when I close
 These lids, I see far fiercer brilliances,
 Skies full of splendid moons, and shooting stars,
 And spouting exhalations, diamond fires,
 And panting fountains quivering with deep glows!
 Yes—this is dark—is it not dark?

Sigifred. My Lord,
 'Tis late; the lights of festival are ever
 Quench'd in the morn.

Ludolph. 'Tis not to-morrow then?

Sigifred. 'Tis early dawn.

Gersa. Indeed full time we slept;
 Say you so, Prince?

Ludolph. I say I quarrell'd with you;
 We did not tilt each other,—that's a blessing,—
 Good gods! no innocent blood upon my head!

Sigifred. Retire, Gersa!

Ludolph. There should be three more here:
 For two of them, they stay away perhaps,
 Being gloomy-minded, haters of fair revels,—
 They know their own thoughts best.

As for the third,

Deep blue eyes semi-shaded in white lids,
 Finish'd with lashes fine for more soft shade,
 Completed by her twin-arch'd ebon brows;
 White temples of exactest elegance,
 Of even mould felicitous and smooth;
 Cheeks fashion'd tenderly on either side,
 So perfect, so divine that our poor eyes
 Are dazzled with the sweet proportioning,
 And wonder that 'tis so,—the magic chance!
 Her nostrils, small, fragrant, fairy-delicate;
 Her lips—I swear no human bones e'er wore
 So taking a disguise; you shall behold her!
 We'll have her presently; aye, you shall see her,
 And wonder at her, friends, she is so fair—
 She is the world's chief jewel, and by heaven

She's mine by right of marriage—she is mine!
 Patience, good people; in fit time I send
 A summoner—she will obey my call,
 Being a wife most mild and dutiful.
 First I would hear what music is prepared
 To herald and receive her; let me hear!

Sigifred. Bid the musicians soothe him tenderly.

[A soft strain of Music]

Ludolph. Ye have none better? no? I am content;
 'Tis a rich sobbing melody, with reliefs
 Full and majestic; it is well enough,
 And will be sweeter, when ye see her pace
 Sweeping into this presence, glisten'd o'er
 With emptied caskets, and her train upheld
 By ladies habited in robes of lawn,
 Sprinkled with golden crescents; others bright
 In silks, with spangles shower'd, and bow'd to
 By Duchesses and pearled Margravines!
 Sad, that the fairest creature of the earth—
 I pray you mind me not—'tis sad, I say,
 That the extremest beauty of the world
 Should so entrench herself away from me,
 Behind a barrier of engender'd guilt!

FROM

King Stephen

(ACT I, SCENE II)

Another part of the Field.

Trumpets sounding a Victory. Enter GLOCESTER, Knights, and Forces.

Glocester. Now may we lift our bruised vizors up,
 And take the flattering freshness of the air.
 While the wide din of battle dies away
 Into times past, yet to be echoed sure
 In the silent pages of our chroniclers.

First Knight. Will Stephen's death be mark'd there, my good Lord,
 Or that we gave him lodging in yon towers?

Glocester. Fain would I know the great usurper's fate.

Enter two Captains severally.

First Captain. My Lord!

Second Captain. Most noble Earl!

First Captain. The King—

Second Captain. The Empress greets—

Glocester. What of the King?

First Captain. He sole and lone maintains

A hopeless bustle mid our swarming arms,

And with a nimble savageness attacks,

Escapes, makes fiercer onset, then anew

Eludes death, giving death to most that dare

Trespass within the circuit of his sword!

He must by this have fallen. Baldwin is taken;

And for the Duke of Bretagne, like a stag

He flies, for the Welsh beagles to hunt down.

God save the Empress!

Glocester. Now our dreaded Queen:

What message from her Highness?

Second Captain. Royal Maud

From the throng'd towers of Lincoln hath look'd down,

Like Pallas from the walls of Ilion.

And seen her enemies havock'd at her feet.

She greets most noble Glocester from her heart,

Intreating him, his captains, and brave knights.

To grace a banquet. The high city gates

Are envious which shall see your triumph pass;

The streets are full of music.

Enter Second Knight.

Glocester. Whence come you?

Second Knight. From Stephen, my good Prince.—Stephen!

Stephen!

Glocester. Why do you make such echoing of his name?

Second Knight. Because I think, my lord, he is no man,

But a fierce demon, 'nointed safe from wounds.

And misbaptized with a Christian name.

Glocester. A mighty soldier!—Does he still hold out?

Second Knight. He shames our victory. His valour still

Keeps elbow-room amid our eager swords,

And holds our bladed falchions all aloof—

His gleaming battle-axe being slaughter-sick,

Smote on the morion of a Flemish knight,
 Broke short in his hand: upon the which he flung
 The heft away with such a vengeful force,
 It paunch'd the Earl of Chester's horse, who then
 Spleen-hearted came in full career at him.

Glocester. Did no one take him at a vantage then?

Second Knight. Three then with tiger leap upon him flew,
 Whom, with his sword swift-drawn and nimbly held,
 He stung away again, and stood to breathe,
 Smiling. Anon upon him rush'd once more
 A throng of foes, and in this renew'd strife,
 My sword met his and snapp'd off at the hilts.

Glocester. Come, lead me to this Mars—and let us move
 In silence, not insulting his sad doom
 With clamorous trumpets. To the Empress bear
 My salutation as befits the time.

[*Exeunt GLOCESTER and Forces.*]

November 1819

The Castle Builder

CASTLE BUILDER

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

In short, convince you that however wise
 You may have grown from convent libraries.
 I have, by many yards at least, been carding
 A longer skein of wit in Convent garden.

BERNARDINE

A very Eden that same place must be!
 Pray what demesne? Whose Lordship's legacy?
 What, have you convents in that Gothic Isle?
 Pray pardon me, I cannot help but smile.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

CASTLE BUILDER

Sir, Convent Garden is a monstrous beast
 From morning, four o'clock, to twelve at noon,
 It swallows cabbages without a spoon,
 And then, from twelve till two, this Eden made is
 A promenade for cooks and ancient ladies;
 And then for supper, 'stead of soup and poaches,
 It swallows chairmen, damns, and hackney coaches.
 In short, Sir, 'tis a very place for monks,
 For it containeth twenty thousand punks,
 Which any man may number for his sport,
 By following fat elbows up a court.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

In such like nonsense would I pass an hour
 With random friar, or rake upon his tour,
 Or one of few of that imperial host
 Who came unmaimed from the Russian frost

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

To-night I'll have my friar; let me think
 About my room,—I'll have it in the pink;
 It should be rich and sombre, and the moon,
 Just in its mid-life in the midst of June,
 Should look thro' four large windows and display
 Clear, but for gold-fish vases in the way,
 Their glassy diamonding on Turkish floor;
 The tapers keep aside, an hour and more,
 To see what else the moon alone can show;
 While the night-breeze doth softly let us know
 My terrace is well bower'd with oranges.
 Upon the floor the dullest spirit sees
 A guitar-ribband and a lady's glove
 Beside a crumple-leaved tale of love;
 A tambour-frame, with Venus sleeping there,
 All finish'd but some ringlets of her hair;
 A viol, bow-strings torn, cross-wise upon
 A glorious folio of Anacreon;
 A skull upon a mat of roses lying,
 Ink'd purple, with a song concerning dying;
 An hour-glass on the turn, amid the trails
 Of passion-flower; just in time there sails

A cloud across the moon,—the lights bring in!
And see what more my phantasy can win.
It is a gorgeous room, but somewhat sad;
The draperies are so as tho' they had
Been made for Cleopatra's winding-sheet;
And opposite the stedfast eye doth meet
A spacious looking-glass, upon whose face,
In letters raven-sombre, you may trace
Old 'Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin.'
Greek busts and statuary have ever been
Held, by the finest spirits, fitter far
Than vase grotesque and Siamesian jar;
Therefore 'tis sure a want of Attic taste
That I should rather love a Gothic waste
Of eyesight on cinque-coloured potter's clay,
Than on the marble fairness of old Greece.
My table-coverlits of Jason's fleece
And black Numidian sheep-wool should be wrought,
Gold, black, and heavy, from the Lama brought.
My ebon sofas should delicious be
With down from Leda's cygnet progeny.
My pictures all Salvator's, save a few
Of Titian's portraiture, and one, though new,
Of Haydon's in its fresh magnificence.
My wine—O good! 'tis here at my desire,
And I must sit to supper with my friar.

* * * * *

And what is Love?

AND what is love? It is a doll dress'd up
For idleness to cosset, nurse, and dandle;
A thing of soft misnomers, so divine
That silly youth doth think to make itself
Divine by loving, and so goes on
Yawning and doting a whole summer long,
Till Miss's comb is made a pearl tiara,
And common Wellingtons turn Romeo boots;
Then Cleopatra lives at number seven,
And Antony resides in Brunswick Square.

Fools! if some passions high have warm'd the world,
 If Queens and Soldiers have play'd deep for hearts,
 It is no reason why such agonies
 Should be more common than the growth of weeds.
 Fools! make me whole again that weighty pearl
 The Queen of Egypt melted, and I'll say
 That ye may love in spite of beaver hats.

1818

Oxford

A PARODY OF WORDSWORTH

THE Gothic looks solemn,
 The plain Doric column
 Supports an old Bishop and Crosier;
 The mouldering arch,
 Shaded o'er by a larch
 Stands next door to Wilson the Hosier.

Vice—that is, by turns,—
 O'er pale faces mourns
 The black tassell trencher and common hat;
 The Chantry boy sings,
 The Steeple-bell rings,
 And as for the Chancellor—*dominat.*

There are plenty of trees,
 And plenty of ease,
 And plenty of fat deer for Parsons;
 And when it is venison,
 Short is the benison,—
 Then each on a leg or thigh fastens.

For there's Bishop's Teign

FOR there's Bishop's teign
 And King's teign
 And Coomb at the clear teign head—
 Where close by the stream
 You may have your cream
 All spread upon barley bread.

There's Arch Brook
And there's larch Brook
Both turning many a mill;
And cooling the drouth
Of the salmon's mouth,
And fattening his silver gill.

There is Wild wood,
A mild hood
To the sheep on the lea o' the down,
Where the golden furze,
With its green, thin spurs,
Doth catch at the maiden's gown.

There is Newton marsh
With its spear grass harsh—
A pleasant summer level
Where the maidens sweet
Of the Market Street
Do meet in the dusk to revel.

There's the Barton rich
With dyke and ditch
And hedge for the thrush to live in
And the hollow tree
For the buzzing bee
And a bank for the wasp to hive in.

And O, and O
The daisies blow
And the primroses are waken'd,
And violets white
Sit in silver plight,
And the green bud's as long as the spike end.

Then who would go
Into dark Soho,
And chatter with dack'd hair'd critics,
When he can stay
For the new-mown hay,
And startle the dappled Prickets?

March 14, 1818

Over the Hill

OVER the hill and over the dale,
 And over the bourn to Dawlish—
 Where Gingerbread Wives have a scanty sale
 And gingerbre[a]d nuts are smallish.

Rantipole Betty she ran down a hill
 And ki[c]ked up her pettic[o]ats fairly
 Says I I'll be Jack if you will be Gill.
 So she sat on the Grass debonnairly.

Here's somebody coming, here's somebody coming!
 Says I 'tis the Wind at a parley
 So without any fuss any hawing and humming
 She lay on the grass debonnairly.

Here's somebody here and here's somebody there!
 Says I hold your tongue you young Gipseey.
 So she held her tongue and lay plump and fair
 And dead as a venus tipsy.

O who wouldn't hie to Dawlish fair
 O who wouldn't stop in a Meadow
 O [who] would not rumple the daisies there
 And make the wild fern for a bed do.

TEIGNMOUTH, *March 24, 1818*

Where be ye going?

WHERE be ye going, you Devon Maid?
 And what have ye there in the basket?
 Ye tight little fairy just fresh from the dairy,
 Will ye give me some cream if I ask it?

I love your meads, and I love your flowers,
And I love your junkets mainly,
But 'hind the door I love kissing more,
O look not so disdainly.

I love your hills, and I love your dales,
And I love your flocks a-bleating—
But O, on the heather to lie together,
With both our hearts a-beating!

I'll put your basket all safe in a nook,
Your shawl I hang up on the willow,
And we will sigh in the daisy's eye
And kiss on a grass-green pillow.

March 14, 1818

A Song about Myself

FROM A LETTER TO FANNY KEATS

THERE was a naughty Boy,
A naughty boy was he,
He would not stop at home,
He could not quiet be—
He took
In his Knapsack
A Book
Full of vowels
And a shirt
With some towels—
A slight cap
For night cap—
A hair brush,
Comb ditto,
New Stockings
For old ones
Would split Oi

This Knapsack
Tight at's back
He rivetted close
And followéd his Nose
To the North,
To the North,
And follow'd his nose
To the North.

There was a naughty boy
And a naughty boy was he,
For nothing would he do
But scribble poetry—
He took
An ink stand
In his hand
And a pen
Big as ten
In the other.
And away
In a Pother
He ran
To the mountains
And fountains
And ghostes
And Postes
And witches
And ditches
And wrote
In his coat
When the weather
Was cool,
Fear of gout,
And without
When the weather
Was warm—
Och the charm
When we choose
To follow one's nose
To the north,
To the north,
To follow one's nose
To the north!

There was a naughty boy
And a naughty boy was he,
He kept little fishes
In washing tubs three
In spite
Of the might
Of the Maid
Nor afraid
Of his Granny-good—
He often would
Hurly burly
Get up early
And go
By hook or crook
To the brook
And bring home
Miller's thumb,
Tittlebat
Not over fat,
Minnows small
As the stall
Of a glove,
Not above
The size
Of a nice
Little Baby's
Little fingers—
O he made
'Twas his trade
Of Fish a pretty Kettle
A Kettle—
A Kettle
Of Fish a pretty Kettle
A Kettle!

There was a naughty Boy,
And a naughty Boy was he,
He ran away to Scotland
The people for to see—
Then he found
That the ground
Was as hard,

That a yard,
Was as long,
That a song
Was as merry,
That a cherry
Was as red—
That lead
Was as weighty,
That fourscore
Was as eighty,
That a door
Was as wooden
As in England—
His shoes so he stood in
And he wonder'd,
He wonder'd,
He stood in his shoes
And he wonder'd.
July 1818

Character of Charles Armitage Brown

HE is to weet a melancholy carle:
Thin in the waist, with bushy head of hair,
As hath the seeded thistle when in parle
It holds the Zephyr, ere it sendeth fair
Its light balloons into the summer air;
Therto his beard had not begun to bloom,
No brush had touch'd his chin or razor sheer;
No care had touch'd his cheek with mortal doom,
But new he was and bright as scarf from Persian loom.

Ne cared he for wine, or half-and-half
Ne cared he for fish or flesh or fowl,
And sauces held he worthless as the chaff;
He 'sdeigned the swine-head at the wassail-bowl;
Ne with lewd ribbalds sat he cheek by jowl;
Ne with sly lemans in the scorer's chair;
But after water-brooks this Pilgrim's soul
Panted, and all his food was woodland air
Though he would oft-times feast on gilliflowers rare.

The slang of cities in no wise he knew,
Tipping the wink to him was heathen Greek;
He sipp'd no olden Tom or ruin blue.
Or nantz or cherry-brandy drank full meek
By many a damsel hoarse and rouge of cheek;
Nor did he know each aged watchman's beat,
Nor in obscured purlieus would he seek
For curled Jewesses, with ankles neat,
Who as they walk abroad make tinkling with their feet.

1819

To Mrs. Reymolds's Cat

CAT! who hast pass'd thy grand climacteric,
How many mice and rats hast in thy days
Destroy'd? How many titbits stolen? Gaze
With those bright languid segments green, and prick
Those velvet ears—but pr'ythee do not stick
Thy latent talons in me—and upraise
Thy gentle mew, and tell me all thy frays
Of fish and mice, and rats and tender chick.
Nay, look not down, nor lick thy dainty wrists;
For all the wheezy asthma and for all
Thy tail's tip is nick'd off, and though the fists
Of many a maid have given thee many a maul,
Still is that fur as soft as when the lists
In youth thou enter'dst on glass-bottled wall.

January 10, 1818

Pensive they sit

PENSIVE they sit, and roll their languid eyes,
Nibble their toast and cool their tea with sighs;
Or else forget the purpose of the night,
Forget their tea, forget their appetite.
See, with cross'd arms they sit—Ah! happy crew!

The fire is going out and no one rings
For coals, and therefore no coals Betty brings.
A fly is in the milk-pot. Must he die
Circl'd by a humane society?
No, no; there, Mr. Werter takes his spoon,
Inserts it, dips the handle, and lo! soon
The little straggler, sav'd from perils dark,
Across the teaboard draws a long wet mark.

Romeo! Arise, take snuffers by the handle,
There's a large cauliflower in each candle.
A winding sheet—ah, me! I must away
To No. 7, just beyond the Circus gay.
Alas. My friend. your coat sits very well;
Where may your Tailor live? I may not tell
O pardon me—I'm absent now and then.
Where *might* my Tailor live? I say again
I cannot tell. let me no more be teased;
He lives in Wapping, *might* live where he pleased.

September 1819

SONNETS

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SONNETS

After dark Vapors

AFTER dark vapors have oppress'd our plains
For a long dreary season, comes a day
Born of the gentle south, and clears away
From the sick heavens all unseemly stains.
The anxious month, relieving from its pains,
Takes as a long-lost right the feel of May;
The eyelids with the passing coolness play
Like rose leaves with the drip of summer rains.
The calmest thoughts come round us: as of leaves
Budding; fruit ripening in stillness; autumn suns
Smiling at eve upon the quiet sheaves;
Sweet Sappho's cheek; a smiling infant's breath;
The gradual sand that through an hour-glass runs:
A woodland rivulet; a poet's death.

31 January 1817

On Chaucer's 'The Floure and the Lefe'

THIS pleasant tale is like a little copse:
The honied lines do freshly interlace
To keep the reader in so sweet a place,
So that he here and there full-hearted stops;
And oftentimes he feels the dewy drops
Come cool and suddenly against his face,
And by the wandering melody may trace
Which way the tender-legged linnets hop.
Oh! what a power hath white Simplicity!
What mighty power has this gentle story!
I that for ever feel athirst for glory
Could at this moment be content to lie
Meekly upon the grass, as those whose sobbings
Were heard of none beside the mournful robins.

February 1818

On the Sea

THIS is so to speak Keats's answer to a question which rang in his ears from *King Lear*—Edgar's 'Hark! do you hear the sea?'

It keeps eternal whisperings around
 Desolate shores, and with its mighty swell
 Gluts twice ten thousand caverns, till the spell
 Of Hecate leaves them their old shadowy sound.
 Often 'tis in such gentle temper found
 That scarcely will the very smallest shell
 Be mov'd for days from where it sometime fell,
 When last the winds of heaven were unbound.
 Oh ye! who have your eye-balls vex'd and tir'd,
 Feast them upon the wideness of the Sea;
 Oh ye! whose ears are dinn'd with uproar rude,
 Or fed too much with cloying melody,
 Sit ye near some old cavern's mouth, and brood
 Until ye start, as if the sea-nymphs quir'd!

August 1817

On Sitting Down to Read King Lear once again

O GOLDEN tongued Romance, with serene lute!
 Fair plumed Syren, Queen of far-away!
 Leave melodizing on this wintry day,
 Shut up thine olden pages, and be mute:
 Adieu! for, once again, the fierce dispute
 Betwixt damnation and impassion'd clay
 Must I burn through; once more humbly assay
 The bitter-sweet of this Shakespearian fruit:
 Chief Poet! and ye clouds of Albion,
 Begetters of our deep eternal theme!
 When through the old oak Forest I am gone,
 Let me not wander in a barren dream,
 But, when I am consumed in the fire,
 Give me new Phoenix wings to fly at my desire.

22 January 1818

To a Lady seen for a Few Moments at Vauxhall

TIME's sea hath been five years at its slow ebb,
Long hours have to and fro let creep the sand,
Since I was tangled in thy beauty's web,
And snared by the ungloving of thine hand.
And yet I never look on midnight sky,
But I behold thine eye's well memory'd light;
I cannot look upon the rose's dye,
But to thy cheek my soul doth take its flight.
I cannot look on any budding flower,
But my fond ear, in fancy at thy lips
And hearkening for a love-sound, doth devour
Its sweets in the wrong sense:—Thou dost eclipse
Every delight with sweet remembering,
And grief unto my darling joys dost bring.

4 February 1818

To Spenser

SPENSER! a jealous honourer of thine,
A forester deep in thy midmost trees,
Did last eve ask my promise to refine
Some English that might strive thine ear to please,
But Elfin Poet 'tis impossible
For an inhabitant of wintry earth
To rise like Phœbus with a golden quell
Fire-wing'd and make a morning in his mirth.
It is impossible to escape from toil
O' the sudden and receive thy spiriting:
The flower must drink the nature of the soil
Before it can put forth its blossoming:
Be with me in the summer days and I
Will for thine honour and his pleasure try.

5 February 1818

To the Nile

IT is a pleasant and perhaps useful exercise in the appreciation of poetical temperaments to compare the line taken by Keats here with what Shelley and Leigh Hunt said in their sonnets written on the same friendly occasion.

SON of the old moon-mountains African!
 Stream of the Pyramid and Crocodile!
 We call thee fruitful, and, that very while,
 A desert fills our seeing's inward span;
 Nurse of swart nations since the world began,
 Art thou so fruitful? or dost thou beguile
 Such men to honour thee, who, worn with toil,
 Rest for a space 'twixt Cairo and Decan?
 O may dark fancies err! they surely do;
 'Tis ignorance that makes a barren waste
 Of all beyond itself. Thou dost bedew
 Green rushes like our rivers, and dost taste
 The pleasant sun-rise; green isles hast thou too,
 And to the sea as happily dost haste.

4 February 1818

When I have Fears

WHEN I have fears that I may cease to be
 Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain,
 Before high-piled books, in charactery,
 Hold like rich garners the full ripen'd grain;
 When I behold, upon the night's starr'd face,
 Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,
 And think that I may never live to trace
 Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance;
 And when I feel, fair creature of an hour,
 That I shall never look upon thee more,
 Never have relish in the fairy power
 Of unreflecting love; then on the shore
 'Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
 Till love and fame to nothingness do sink.

31 January 1818

Written in Answer to a Sonnet

BELONGS to the old contest between Blue Eyes and Black. Reynolds had written for the glory of the latter.

Dark eyes are dearer far
Than those that mock the hyacinthine bell—
By J. H. REYNOLDS

BLUE! 'Tis the life of heaven; the domain
Of Cynthia; the wide palace of the sun;
The tent of Hesperus, and all his train;
The bosomer of clouds, gold, grey and dun.
Blue! 'Tis the life of waters: Ocean
And all its vassal streams, pools numberless,
May rage, and foam, and fret, but never can
Subside, if not to dark blue nativeness.
Blue! Gentle cousin of the forest-green,
Married to green in all the sweetest flowers,
Forget-me-not, blue bell, and that queen
Of secrecy, the violet: what strange powers
Hast thou, as a mere shadow! But how great,
When in an Eye thou art, alive with fate!

8 February 1818

To J. R. (James Rice)

O THAT a week could be an age, and we
Felt parting and warm meeting every week,
Then one poor year a thousand years would be,
The flush of welcome ever on the cheek:
So could we live long life in little space,
So time itself would be annihilate,
So a day's journey in oblivious haze
To serve our joys would lengthen and dilate.
O to arrive each Monday morn from Ind!
To land each Tuesday from the rich Levant!
In little time a host of joys to bind,
And keep our souls in one eternal pant!
This morn, my friend, and yester-evening taught
Me how to harbour such a happy thought.

On a Leander Gem

WHICH MISS REYNOLDS, MY KIND FRIEND, GAVE ME

COME hither all sweet maidens soberly,
 Down-looking, ay, and with a chasten'd light,
 Hid in the fringes of your eyelids white,
 And meekly let your fair hands joined be,
 As if so gentle that ye could not see
 Untouch'd a victim of your beauty bright,
 Sinking away to his young spirit's night,—
 Sinking bewilder'd 'mid the dreary sea:
 'Tis young Leander toiling to his death;
 Nigh swooning, he doth purse his weary lips
 For Hero's cheek, and smiles against her smile.
 O horrid dream! see how his body dips
 Dead-heavy; arms and shoulders gleam awhile:
 He's gone: up bubbles all his amorous breath!

March 1818

Four Seasons

FOUR seasons fill the measure of the year;
 There are four seasons in the mind of man:
 He has his lusty Spring, when fancy clear
 Takes in all beauty with an easy span:
 He has his Summer, when luxuriously
 Spring's honied cud of youthful thought he loves
 To ruminate, and by such dreaming nigh
 His nearest unto heaven: quiet coves
 His soul has in its Autumn, when his wings
 He furleth close; contented so to look
 On mists in idleness—to let fair things
 Pass by unheeded as a threshold brook.
 He has his Winter too of pale misfeature,
 Or else he would forego his mortal nature.

September 1818

On Visiting the Tomb of Burns

THE town, the churchyard, and the setting sun,
The clouds, the trees, the rounded hills all seem,
Though beautiful, cold—strange—as in a dream,
I dreamed long ago, now new begun.
The short-liv'd, paly summer is but won
From winter's ague, for one hour's gleam;
Though sapphire-warm, their stars do never beam:
All is cold beauty; pain is never done:
For who has mind to relish, Minos-wise,
The real of beauty free from that dead hue
Sickly imagination and sick pride
Cast wan upon it? Burns! with honour due
I oft have honour'd thee. Great shadow, hide
Thy face; I sin against thy native skies.

? 1 July 1818

This Mortal Body

THIS mortal body of a thousand days
Now fills, O Burns, a space in thine own room,
Where thou didst dream alone on budded bays,
Happy and thoughtless of thy day of doom!
My pulse is warm with thine own barley-bree,
My head is light with pledging a great soul,
My eyes are wandering, and I cannot see,
Fancy is dead and drunken at its goal;
Yet can I stamp my foot upon thy floor,
Yet can I ope thy window-sash to find
The meadow thou hast tramped o'er and o'er,
Yet can I think of thee till thought is blind,
Yet can I gulp a bumper to thy name,—
O smile among the shades, for this is fame!

12-13 July 1818

To Ailsa Rock

HEARKEN, thou craggy ocean pyramid!
 Give answer from thy voice, the sea-fowls' screams!
 When were thy shoulders mantled in huge streams?
 When, from the sun, was thy broad forehead hid?
 How long is't since the mighty Power bid
 Thee heave to airy sleep from fathom dreams?
 Sleep in the lap of thunder or sunbeams,
 Or when grey clouds are thy cold coverlid.
 Thou answer'st not; for thou art dead asleep;
 Thy life is but two dead eternities—
 The last in air, the former in the deep:
 First with the whales, last with the eagle-skies—
 Drown'd wast thou till an earthquake made thee steep,
 Another cannot wake thy giant size.

? 10 July 1818

Read Me a Lesson, Muse

READ me a lesson, Muse, and speak it loud
 Upon the top of Nevis, blind in mist!
 I look into the chasms, and a shroud
 Vapourous doth hide them,—just so much I wist
 Mankind do know of hell; I look o'erhead,
 And there is sullen mist,—even so much
 Mankind can tell of heaven; mist is spread
 Before the earth, beneath me,—even such,
 Even so vague is man's sight of himself!
 Here are the craggy stones beneath my feet,—
 Thus much I know that, a poor witless elf,
 I tread on them; that all my eye doth meet
 Is mist and crag, not only on this height,
 But in the world of thought and mental might!

? 3 August 1818

Why did I laugh?

WHY did I laugh to-night? No voice will tell:
 No God, no Demon of severe response,
 Deigns to reply from heaven or from Hell.
 Then to my human heart I turn at once.
 Heart! Thou and I are here sad and alone;
 I say, why did I laugh! O mortal pain!
 O Darkness! Darkness! ever must I moan,
 To question Heaven and Hell and Heart in vain.
 Why did I laugh? I know this Being's lease,
 My fancy to its utmost blisses spreads;
 Yet would I on this very midnight cease,
 And the world's gaudy ensigns see in shreds;
 Verse, Fame, and Beauty are intense indeed,
 But Death intenser—Death is Life's high need.

1819

To Sleep

'THINE hymn' may be explained by Book IV of *Paradise Lost* ('Now came still evening on' . . .), the draft of the sonnet being written in a copy of Milton's poem. 'Conscience' is said to be used as Milton used it, for 'consciousness'

O SOFT embalmer of the still midnight,
 Shutting, with careful fingers and benign,
 Our gloom-pleas'd eyes, embower'd from the light,
 Enshaded in forgetfulness divine:
 O soothest Sleep! if so it please thee, close
 In midst of this thine hymn my willing eyes,
 Or wait the 'Amen,' ere thy poppy throws
 Around my bed its lulling charities.
 Then save me, or the passed day will shine
 Upon my pillow, breeding many woes,—
 Save me from curious conscience, that still lords
 Its strength for darkness, burrowing like a mole;
 Turn the key deftly in the oiled wards,
 And seal the hushed casket of my soul.

1819

On Fame

FAME, like a wayward girl, will still be coy
To those who woo her with too slavish knees,
But makes surrender to some thoughtless boy,
And dotes the more upon a heart at ease;
She is a gipsy, will not speak to those
Who have not learnt to be content without her;
A jilt, whose ear was never whisper'd close,
Who thinks they scandal her who talk about her;
A very gipsy is she, Nilus-born,
Sister-in-law to jealous Potiphar;
Ye love-sick bards, repay her scorn for scorn,
Ye artists lovelorn, madmen that ye are!
Make your best bow to her and bid adieu,
Then, if she likes it, she will follow you.

'You cannot eat your cake and have it too.'—*Proverb.*

How fever'd is the man, who cannot look
Upon his mortal days with temperate blood,
Who vexes all the leaves of his life's book,
And robs his fair name of its maidenhood;
It is as if the rose should pluck herself,
Or the ripe plum finger its misty bloom,
As if a Naiad, like a meddling elf,
Should darken her pure grot with muddy gloom.
But the rose leaves herself upon the briar
For winds to kiss and grateful bees to feed,
And the ripe plum still wears its dim attire,
The undisturbed lake has crystal space,
Why then should man, teasing the world for grace,
Spoil his salvation for a fierce miscreed?

On a Dream

AFTER READING DANTE'S EPISODE OF
PAULO AND FRANCESCA

As Hermes once took to his feathers light,
When lulled Argus, baffled, swoon'd and slept,
So on a Delphic reed my idle spright
So play'd, so charm'd, so conquer'd, so bereft
The dragon-world of all its hundred eyes;
And, seeing it asleep, so fled away—
Not to pure Ida with its snow-cold skies,
Nor unto Tempe where Jove griev'd a day;
But to that second circle of sad hell,
Where 'mid the gust, the whirlwind, and the flaw
Of rain and hail-stones, lovers need not tell
Their sorrows. Pale were the sweet lips I saw,
Pale were the lips I kiss'd, and fair the form
I floated with, about that melancholy storm.

April 1819

If by Dull Rhymes

KEATS lived in the time of sonnets innumerable and many of them exactly following certain types; his own use of the form is free enough and it is possible to complain of his occasional carelessness in it. On this occasion he calls for innovation but for the most circumspect art ('misers of sound and syllable').

If by dull rhymes our English must be chain'd,
And, like Andromeda, the Sonnet sweet
Fetter'd, in spite of pained loveliness,
Let us find out, if we must be constrain'd,
Sandals more interwoven and complete
To fit the naked foot of poesy:
Let us inspect the lyre, and weigh the stress
Of every chord, and see what may be gain'd
By ear industrious, and attention meet;
Misers of sound and syllable no less
Than Midas of his coinage, let us be
Jealous of dead leaves in the bay—wreath crown;
So, if we may not let the Muse be free,
She will be bound with garlands of her own.

1819

The Day is Gone

THE day is gone, and all its sweets are gone!
Sweet voice, sweet lips, soft hand and softer breast,
Warm breath, light whisper, tender semi-tone,
Bright eyes, accomplish'd shape, and lang'rous waist!
Faded the flower and all its budded charms,
Faded the sight of beauty from my eyes,
Faded the shape of beauty from my arms,
Faded the voice, warmth, whiteness, paradise—
Vanish'd unseasonably at shut of eve,
When the dusk holiday or midnight
Of fragrant-curtain'd love begins to weave
The woof of darkness thick, for hid delight;
But, as I've read love's missal through to-day,
He'll let me sleep, seeing I fast and pray.

1819

I cry your Mercy

I CRY your mercy—pity—love! aye, love!
Merciful love that tantalizes not,
One-thoughted, never-wandering, guileless love;
Unmask'd, and being seen without a blot!
O! let me have thee whole, all, all be mine!
That shape, that fairness, that sweet minor zest
Of love, your kiss; those hands, those eyes divine,
That warm, white, lucent, million-pleasured breast,
Yourself—your soul—in pity give me all,
Withhold no atom's atom or I die,
Or living on perhaps, your wretched thrall,
Forget, in the mist of idle misery,
Life's purposes,—the palate of my mind
Losing its gust, and my ambition blind!

1819

Sonnet

WRITTEN ON A BLANK PAGE IN SHAKESPEARE'S POEMS.
FACING 'A LOVER'S COMPLAINT'

KEATS copied the sonnet in a book, *Shakespeare's Poems*, which he gave to Severn on their way to Italy. It has thus been taken for his very latest composition, but its date has been referred to 1819. The text is not certainly decided. Another version of the last lines, for example, runs,

*To hear, to feel her tender-taken breath,
Half passionless, and so swoon on to death.*

BRIGHT star, would I were stedfast as thou art—
Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night
And watching, with eternal lids apart,
Like nature's patient, sleepless Eremite,
The moving waters at their priestlike task,
Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,
Or gazing on the new soft-fallen mask
Of snow upon the mountains and the moors.
No—yet still stedfast, still unchangeable,
Pillow'd upon my fair love's ripening breast,
To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,
Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,
Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
And so live ever—or else swoon to death.

1819

INDEX OF FIRST LINES

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever	109
After dark vapors have oppress'd our plains	393
Ah! woe is me, poor silver-wing!	350
And what is love? It is a doll dress'd up	381
As Hermes once took to his feathers light	403
As late I rambled in the happy fields	88
Asleep! O sleep a little while, white pearl	353
Auranthe! My Life!	374
 Bards of Passion and of Mirth	264
Blue! 'Tis the life of heaven; the domain	397
Bright star, would I were stedfast as thou art	405
 Cat! who hast pass'd thy grand climacteric	389
Chief of organic numbers!	348
Come hither all sweet maidens soberly	398
 Dear Reynolds, as last night I lay in bed	368
Deep in the shady sadness of a vale	270
 Ever let the Fancy roam	261
 Fair Isabel, poor simple Isabel!	231
Fame, like a wayward girl, will still be coy	402
Fanatics have their dreams, wherewith they weave	295
For there's Bishop's teign	382
Four seasons fill the measure of the year	398
Full many a dreary hour have I past	79
 Give me a golden pen, and let me lean	92
Glory and loveliness have passed away	54
God of the golden bow	342
Good Kosciusko, thy great name alone	94
Great spirits now on earth are sojourning	93
Grievously are we tantaliz'd, one and all	375

Had I a man's fair form, then might my sighs	86
Hadst thou liv'd in days of old	71
Happy, happy glowing fire	353
Happy is England! I could be content	94
Hast thou from the caves of Golconda, a gem	69
He is to weet a melancholy carle	388
Hearken, thou craggy ocean pyramid!	400
Hence, Burgundy, Claret, and Port	357
High-mindedness, a jealousy for good	92
How fever'd is the man, who cannot look	402
How many bards gild the lapses of time!	87
I cry your mercy—pity—love! aye, love!	404
I had a dove and the sweet dove died	349
I stood tip-toe upon a little hill	55
If by dull rhymes our English must be chain'd	403
In drear-nighted December	347
In midmost Ind, beside Hydaspes cool	311
In short, convince you that however wise	379
In thy western halls of gold	341
It keeps eternal whisperings around	394
Just at the self-same beat of Time's wide wings	279
Keen, fitful gusts are whisp'ring here and there	90
Lo! I must tell a tale of chivalry	62
Love in a hut, with water and a crust	222
Many the wonders I this day have seen	86
Mortal, that thou mayst understand aright	306
Mother of Hermes! and still youthful Maia	343
Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold	91
Muse of my native land! loftiest Muse!	184
My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains	255
No, no, go not to Lethe, neither twist	269
No! those days are gone away	266
Not Aladdin magian	372
Now may we lift our bruised vizors up	377
Now Morning from her orient chamber came	74
Nymph of the downward smile and sidelong glance	88

O Goddess! hear these tuneless numbers, wrung	259
O golden tongued Romance, with serene lute	394
O soft embalmer of the still midnight	401
O solitude! if I must with thee dwell	89
O Sorrow, why dost borrow	188
O sovereign power of love! O grief! O balm!	133
O that a week could be an age, and we	397
O thou whose face hath felt the winter's wind	367
O! were I one of the Olympian twelve	351
O, what can ail thee, Knight-at-arms	361
Oft have you seen a swan superbly frowning	82
Oh, I am frighten'd with most hateful thoughts	352
Old Meg she was a Gipsy	359
One morn before me were three figures seen	344
Over the hill and over the dale	384
 Pensive they sit, and roll their languid eyes	 389
Physician Nature! let my spirit blood!	346
 Read me a lesson, Muse, and speak it loud	 400
 Saint Agnes' Eve—Ah! bitter chill it was!	 245
Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness	268
Shed no tear—O shed no tear!	350
Small, busy flames play through the fresh laid coals	89
Son of the old moon-mountains African!	396
Souls of Poets dead and gone	265
Spenser! a jealous honourer of thine	395
Spirit here that reignest	357
Sweet are the pleasures that to verse belong	76
 The day is gone, and all its sweets are gone	 404
The Gothic looks solemn	382
The poetry of earth is never dead	93
The stranger lighted from his steed	352
The sun, with his great eye	351
The town, the churchyard, and the setting sun	399
There are who lord it o'er their fellow-men	158
There is a charm in footing slow across a silent plain	371
There was a naughty boy	385
This living hand, now warm and capable	364
This mortal body of a thousand days	399

This pleasant tale is like a little copse	393
Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness	258
Thus in alternate uproar and sad peace	288
Time's sea hath been five years at its slow ebb	395
To one who has been long in city pent	90
 Upon a Sabbath-day it fell	 335
Upon a time, before the faery broods	213
 Welcome joy, and welcome sorrow	 358
What can I do to drive away	363
What is more gentle than a wind in summer?	96
What though, for showing truth to flatter'd state	87
What though while the wonders of nature exploring	68
When by my solitary hearth I sit	72
When I have fears that I may cease to be	396
When wedding-fiddles are a-playing	352
Where be ye going, you Devon Maid?	384
Where's the Poet? show him! show him	359
Why did I laugh to-night? No voice will tell	401
 Young Calidore is paddling o'er the lake	 64

